

By Ryllis Goslin Lynip

The First of Two Volumes 

With Selected Passages from
The Bible: A New Translation

by Dr. James Moffatt

Harper & Brothers, New York

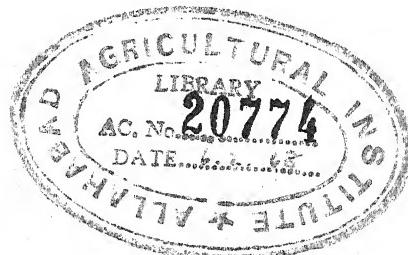
**GREAT
IDEAS
OF THE
BIBLE
OUTLINED
FOR MODERNS**

GREAT IDEAS OF THE BIBLE

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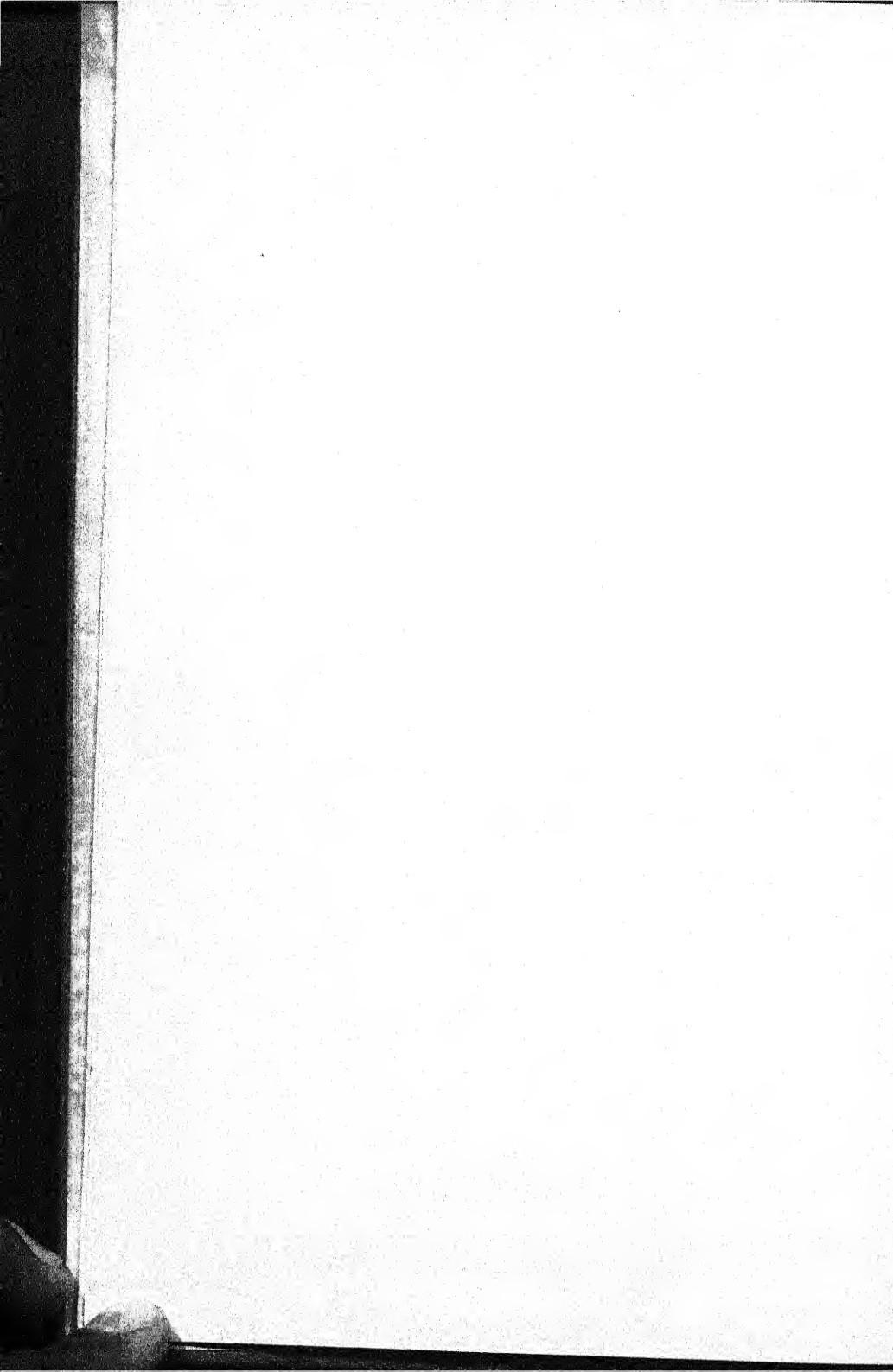


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TO MY SON
DAVID ALEXANDER GOSLIN
AND TO HIS FATHER
THE REVEREND
OMAR PANCOAST GOSLIN
WHOSE FAITH IN YOUTH
INSPIRED THIS PROJECT

1000







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INTRODUCTION

THIS book and the forthcoming companion volume attempt to present in understandable form the essential ideas of the Bible, truths that were announced to the world thousands of years ago, yet are true in every age. Because these are the moral and spiritual principles of human life, understanding of them is urgently needed today. The aim has been to avoid theological discussion and to emphasize those ideals and values which contribute to the building of character and to the achievement of high purpose.

It is intended for modern young men and women who will have to face crucial problems in the atomic age. Their responsibilities are great. Their opportunities are tremendous. With the means now at their command, they have the possibility of helping to usher in an age of peace and prosperity such as the world has never known. Whether they fulfill their responsibilities and measure up to their opportunities will be determined by their awareness of moral law and spiritual values, by their sense of purpose, by the quality of their religious faith.

The procedure, therefore, has been to select those passages from both the Old and the New Testaments which would have the greatest possible meaning for modern life. About one-tenth of the total Bible is included in the two volumes and the selections have been organized by ideas instead of being arranged by Books from Genesis to Revelation. For

reference purposes, however, a list of the Bible passages, arranged in the traditional order, is included at the end of each volume.

The new translation of the Bible by Dr. James Moffatt, which was published first in 1922 and revised in 1935, has been used in order to present the Bible in fresh and dynamic terms. While the King James Version will always have great appeal because of its literary quality, the reader will discover new insights as well as poetic power in Dr. Moffatt's translation. New wording serves to illuminate familiar phrases and reminds us that Jesus and the prophets did not speak in the stilted language of the seventeenth century. Rather they spoke with startling directness in the vernacular of their own times. The timeless truths which they championed become more compelling when phrased in modern, twentieth-century language.

Wherever the Biblical reference at the end of a selection indicates a change in the arrangement of verses, that reordering was made by Dr. Moffatt in the process of translation; the only editing of the text of his Bible has been to remove the italics which he used in the New Testament to indicate quotations from the Old Testament. In the complete Moffatt Bible the use of italics is clear and helpful, but here, it is felt, italics would tend to confuse rather than enlighten the reader.

The outline adopted for this "idea Bible" requires a word of explanation. There are many ways in which such a book might be organized. Again, the choice of ideas, and the ordering of them, was determined with the needs and attitudes of youth in mind. Since the primary purpose is to interpret religious truth to those who are being trained in the scientific approach to life, it seemed wise to start with the effort to understand the nature of God and man, emphasizing the rational approach to religion; then analyze the meaning of right and wrong as defined in the moral laws of life proclaimed by the prophets of the Old Testament.

The third major section of Volume I presents those ideas and values which Jesus gave to the world as a new way of life.

Volume II will begin with faith as the great spiritual adventure, and a series of brief biographies illustrating the power of faith, including Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Jeremiah and Paul. The second volume will then consider the problem of suffering as a test of faith; and will finally explore those unfailing sources of inspiration which are the mainspring of character: genuine love, with a study of Jesus as the supreme example; prayer, its purposes and attitudes; the bright vision of a realm called heaven; and the promise of eternal life.

The reader will find, of course, considerable overlapping and some repetition both of ideas and Bible material. This would seem inevitable in any presentation of this kind, since it is impossible to separate the various aspects of religious truth into airtight compartments.

The introductions and explanations have been prepared with this thought uppermost: that the purpose is not to carry the thinking back to ancient times but rather to bring the great ideas of the Bible forward and plant them firmly in the middle of the twentieth century as a challenge to modern youth. Therefore, historical background has been limited to such facts as serve to clarify situations or dramatize the message. At the same time, while the approach is not mainly historical, an effort has been made to indicate that the Bible is a long record of slow development, containing many levels of thought, understanding and belief; that in this great library of Books one finds evidence of primitive beliefs and custom as well as the achievement of vast spiritual concepts and lofty standards for human conduct. Above all, an effort has been made to show the importance of each idea in present-day problems and experience, and as far as possible to indicate the close relationship between ancient

discoveries of truth and the modern findings of both the physical and the social sciences.

While as editor I must accept full responsibility for personal views and biases expressed in the explanatory material, my indebtedness to others is vast. As a layman, I have, of course, had to rely on Bible scholars and other experts in related fields. Therefore I make no claim either to originality or authority. Even the idea for such a book was not original but grew out of a statement by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick that there was need for a youth Bible which would indicate the various levels of development. This need was emphasized as I saw my own son growing up without adequate appreciation for the meaning and value of the Bible. During the past four years the original idea has expanded "for better or for worse" into the present manuscript. In addition to his earlier writings, two of Dr. Fosdick's more recent books have proved indispensable: *A Guide to Understanding the Bible* and *The Man From Nazareth*. I am most grateful to him also for his continuing interest in the project and his willingness to read the completed manuscript of both volumes.

It is difficult also to express adequately my gratitude to Dr. Chester C. McCown for his careful reading of the manuscript in the interest of Biblical scholarship and New Testament interpretation. His criticism and stimulating suggestions have been invaluable.

Grateful acknowledgment is also due Dr. Edward W. Blakeman both for his friendly encouragement and for his excellent advice on the approach to modern youth. The manuscript was greatly benefited by having the advantage of his long and varied experience as university pastor and youth counsellor. Various parts of the manuscript have also been read by teen-age critics and youth groups, whose comments have been most helpful. I desire to express appreciation as well to other faculty members of the Pacific School of

Religion for making available to me the Library and other facilities of the School.

This list of acknowledgments would be far from complete unless I paid tribute to the helpfulness and patience of members of my own household: to my housekeeper, Hattie Washington Jackson, whose devoted service made it possible for me to undertake this four-year project without neglecting too seriously my family responsibilities; to my son David, who has been my best "guinea-pig" and harshest critic; and to my husband, Benjamin Franklin Lynip, who has listened patiently to the reading of every chapter, who has given both wise counsel and constructive criticism on numerous points, and whose enthusiasm for the idea has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement.

Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to my friends at Harper & Brothers: Mr. David Scott and Mr. Eugene Exman, whose whole-hearted cooperation made this venture possible.

Ryllis Alexander Goslin Lynip

Berkeley
California
August 1953



SECTION ONE

The Nature of God and Man



CHAPTER 1

The Search for God

BY FAR the most important discovery made by man is awareness of the existence of God. Travel around the world and you will find no nation without some measure of belief in a Supreme Being. The desire to understand God has not been limited to a few men and women in any age or nation. The search has been universal and unceasing: in every nation and in every age, among savage tribes as well as among philosophers and poets, evident in the ruins of ancient civilizations as well as in the writings of modern scientists and scholars. Even where men have tried to outlaw religion and set up man-made loyalties, the idea stubbornly persists.

To be sure, there have been and still are many different conceptions as to the nature of God. Man's attempt to understand the vast, invisible Force we call God has not been easy. It has been a long, slow process, as difficult and elusive as the study of the atom. At various stages men have come to know one or two aspects of His nature, only to miss other attributes far more important. Too frequently man's failure to live up to his own high possibilities has been due to a false religion based on inadequate understanding of God.

Have you ever stopped to consider exactly what you mean when you talk about God? When you were a little child, perhaps you thought of Him as "a giant who lived somewhere up in the sky." As you grew older, however, and learned more and more about the physical universe, you abandoned

this notion along with belief in Santa Claus. But what have you put in its place?

Perhaps you wonder what difference it makes to you as an individual what you believe about God. The answer lies in the essential fact that as a human being you have a mind that wants to know the truth, and a spirit that is capable of courage, love, and devotion to high purpose. What you think of yourself as a person and what you do with your life depend to a very large extent upon what you believe about God and your relationship to Him.

All human experience, past and present, points to the fact that, just as a navigator needs compass and map, human beings need belief in God as the source of courage and faith, as the inspiration for ideals and motives which give validity and direction to life, as the assurance of hope and joy and successful living. The search for God, therefore, is not merely an attempt to find some explanation for the universe and the happenings of life, but an urgent desire to make contact with the vast Mind Force, to become aware of Divine Purpose, and thus to discover meaning and purpose for our own lives.

Of course, there are some who will say that our search is useless because the idea of God is merely wishful thinking on the part of those who are too weak to live their own lives, and that all life can be explained on the basis of physical laws and mechanical power. Yet strangely enough, those men and women throughout history who have had the firmest belief in God and the clearest understanding of Him have not been weaklings who were afraid to face danger and difficulty. They have been the strongest members of the race: those who have done most to direct the course of history and contribute to human progress.

If God is to become a true source of strength and inspiration, we need to know the best and highest that has been discovered about Him. This means that before we start

exploring we must set aside any childish notions that may still cling to our minds. There is no place for the great big man with a long, white beard sitting on a throne somewhere up in heaven. Nor is there room for the detective with millions of eyes who is always watching to see whether we are good or bad and ready to reward or punish us accordingly. We shall not be content with a cold, impersonal God of nature who in the distant past set the earth spinning through space and has no more interest in human beings than in grains of sand on an ocean beach. If our search is to end in such a God, we might as well stop now and save ourselves the trouble of looking.

The search for the true God is a task to challenge the finest intellect, requiring both the analysis of reason and the farthest reaches of imagination. If you would try to understand God, you must be willing to stretch your mind to its full capacity, just as you would strain every nerve and muscle in the running of a race.

When early scientists could not discover just what electricity was, they did not deny its existence or consider it useless. They went carefully to work to watch what it did and to find out how to use its power for light, heat and energy. If we would discover God, therefore, we must look for Him not only in the physical universe with its infinite variety of form and substance but still more in human experience, in those thoughts, actions, and aspirations which become the surest evidence of His reality.

If you would find God, you will let your imagination travel back millions of years to the creation of the world and then forward for aeons of time stretching into eternity; you will peer beyond the visible stars into the outer edges of the universe; you will join the physicists in their study of a single atom half-a-millionth of an inch across; you will share an artist's search for beauty of form and color and the musician's striving for beauty of sound. And you will go on to

far more amazing and incredible facts, yet facts so commonplace that we take them for granted: the love of a father for his children, the willingness of men and women to spend their lives in service for a great cause, the selfless devotion to an ideal which fires men with the courage to die for it. You will climb a hill called Calvary and watch the strongest character who ever lived being nailed to a cross because he refused to surrender his faith in God as the spiritual Father of mankind and his love for all men as his brothers. These are some of the facts you will review in your attempt to understand the true nature of God.

In no other book is the record of man's search for God so vivid as in the Bible. The picture which we get there of God was not the result of any sudden inspiration but of a gradual process of understanding which grew out of actual experience—a process that began at the dawn of history and continued for thousands of years.

A word from the Eternal: A wise man must not glory in his wisdom, nor a warrior in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches; he who glories is to glory in this, that he has insight into me, that he knows I am the Eternal, dealing in kindness, justice, and goodness upon earth—for these are my delight.

Jeremiah 9:23, 24



CHAPTER 2

God as Creator

THOUSANDS of years ago, before there were histories or science books or any books at all, people wondered where the earth came from, why the sun rose and set every day, why there were stars in the sky at night, why dry land extended over some of the earth and water over other parts, why trees and grass and flowers grew out of the ground, why there were birds, animals and fish on earth and in the sea. These were only a few of the questions that men asked in those early days long ago when they were trying to understand the strange world they lived in.

Perhaps you used to ask a great many questions too. You were probably interested in the stories of dinosaurs and other prehistoric animals, and in everything that science could tell about the gradual changes that have taken place until finally after a few billion years we now have the modern world. As a result of long research, scientists have come to understand a good deal about how the earth came into existence, how mountains and oceans were formed, how some animals like the dinosaurs disappeared while others went on developing. But there is still a vast amount which even the experts do not understand. In fact, the more learned the scientist the more willingly he admits how little he really knows about the origin of life and what started the process we call evolution. No scientist has yet been able to create life.

That is why the wisest men of today still believe, as did

the people of long ago, that there must be a Great Mind in the universe, a Divine Will that is responsible for the creation of the world and all that is in it. In other words, our earth is not an accident, liable to disappear as suddenly as a shooting star, but part of a great plan which is being worked out according to very definite laws, laws established at the beginning of time to continue until its end.

One of the scientific wonders of modern times is the gigantic telescope on Palomar Mountain in California. The 200-inch lens on this mighty star-camera, twice as large as that of any previous telescope, is a million times more powerful than the human eye. With it the astronomer can pierce the outer edges of the known universe and photograph distant star-worlds so far away that the light from these stars has been on its way to the earth for millions of years. In fact, the light now being photographed may have started back in the days when our earth was just being formed!

With such an instrument astronomers may be on the verge of learning how a star such as our sun comes into existence, what the outer limits of the universe actually are, and other mysteries that have baffled the human mind. However, in all the study of the universe that has been done by this or any other telescope, one fact becomes increasingly certain: no matter how far one penetrates into outer space, there is still order and plan—a vast system which holds the myriads of flaming suns and shining stars in place.

The men who wrote the Bible did not have a Palomar telescope to examine the universe with. But there is evidence that they sat on mountain-tops and watched the stars, that they learned to depend upon the regularity of the sun and seasons, becoming aware of some vast Power which they believed responsible for the wonders of nature and for all forms of life on the earth.

The story of creation we find in the first chapter of the Bible had been told by word of mouth for hundreds of years

before it was finally written down by one of the world's first poets about 600 B.C. Like all great poets, this unknown writer was primarily concerned not with details but with fundamental truth. He told his story with a purpose: he wanted us to understand that our world is the work of a Supreme Being whom he calls God; that God is the divine Creator who brought order out of chaos, designed the universe, and gave life to all creatures within it. We know that the world was not created in a day or in six days. But the essential truth remains that the world and its physical laws are the work of the Great Mind we call God.

The following passages, therefore, describe God as Creator of the universe and of man.

This is the story of how the universe was formed.

When God began to form the universe, the world was void and vacant, darkness lay over the abyss; but the spirit of God was hovering over the waters. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness; God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night. Evening came and morning came, making one day.

Then God said, "Let there be a Vault between the waters, to divide them." So God made the Vault, dividing the waters under the Vault from the waters above the Vault, and God called the Vault heaven. Evening came and morning came, making the second day.

Then God said, "Let the waters below the heaven be gathered into one place, to let dry land appear." And so it was. God called the dry land Earth, and the gathered waters he called Sea. God saw that it was good.

And God said, "Let the earth put out verdure, plants that bear seed and trees yielding fruit of every kind, fruit with

seed in it." And so it was; the earth brought forth verdure, plants bearing seed of every kind and trees yielding fruits of every kind, fruit with seed in it. God saw that it was good. Evening came and morning came, making the third day.

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the Vault of heaven to separate day from night, to mark out the sacred seasons, the days and the years; let them shine in the Vault of heaven, to shed light on the earth"; and so it was. For God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light together with the stars to rule the night. God set them in the Vault of heaven to shed light upon earth, to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. Evening came and morning came, making the fourth day.

Then God said, "Let the waters teem with shoals of living creatures, and let birds fly over the earth under the open Vault of heaven." So God formed the great sea-monsters and every kind of living creature that moves, with which the waters teem, and also every kind of winged bird. God saw that it was good, and God blessed them: "Be fruitful," he said, "multiply, and fill the waters of the sea; let the birds multiply on earth." Evening came and morning came, making the fifth day.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature, animals, reptiles, and wild beasts." And so it was. God made every kind of wild beast, every kind of animal, and every kind of reptile; and God saw that it was good.

Genesis 2:4, 1:2-25

Finally, we come to the grand climax of the story: the creation of man "with mastery over" all other living creatures. The poet thought of God not as a physical being but as Mind or Spiritual Power. To be made in the likeness of God, therefore, meant to be given a mind like that of God,

with ability to think and to plan, with imagination to invent and to create.

Then said God, "Let us make man in our own likeness, to resemble us, with mastery over the fish in the sea, the birds of the air, the animals, every wild beast of the earth, and every reptile that crawls on the earth." So God formed man in his own likeness, in the likeness of God he formed him: male and female, he formed both. And God blessed them: God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, mastering the fish in the sea, the birds of the air and every living creature that crawls on earth."

God also said, "See, I give you every plant that bears seed all over the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; be that your food. To every wild beast on earth, to every bird of the air, and to every living creature that crawls on earth, I give all the green growth for food." And so it was. God saw all that he had made, and very good it was. Evening came and morning came, making the sixth day.

Genesis 1:26-31

Praise of God as Creator appears time and again in the Psalms, the great collection of poems which were written by many unknown poets over a long period and were finally collected in their present form a century or more before Jesus was born. For example, the writer of Psalm 19 sees God in the wonders of nature. The selection from Psalm 90 expresses the magnificent sense and the vivid realization that God is eternal, far above and beyond our petty concepts of time and space. Psalm 8 reflects the poet's amazement that God, with all His majesty and glory, should have endowed man with dignity and power, as the highest product of creation. Psalm 104 was evidently written by some ancient Wordsworth who had observed animal life and enjoyed the beauties of nature.

The heavens proclaim God's splendour,
 the sky speaks of his handiwork;
 day after day takes up the tale,
 night after night makes him known;
 Their speech has never a word,
 not a sound for the ear,
 and yet their message spreads the wide world over,
 their meaning carries to earth's end.

See, there is the sun's pavilion pitched!
 He glows like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
 exults like a hero to run his course;
 he sets out from one end of heaven,
 and round he passes to the other,
 missing nothing with his heat!

Psalm 19:1-6

Age after age, Lord, thou hast been our home;
 from all eternity thou hast been God,
 ere ever hills were born,
 ere ever earth and world were made.

Thou crumblest man away,
 summoning men back to the dust,
 thou to whom a thousand years are like
 the flight of yesterday,
 like an hour passing in the night.

Psalm 90:1-4

O thou Eternal One, our Lord,
 what majesty is thine o'er all the world!
 High in the heaven thou hast set thy splendour,
 to check thy foes, to crush the rebels.
 Let me sing of this, thy heavenly strength,
 like tiny children lisping out thy praise;
 for, as I look up to the heavens thy fingers made,
 the moon and stars that thou hast shaped,

I ask, "And what is man, that thou should'st
think of him?"

What is a mortal man, that thou should'st
heed him?"

Yet thou hast made him little less than divine,
thou hast crowned him with majesty and honour,
giving him sway o'er all thy hands have made,
with all things underneath his feet—
sheep and oxen, all of them,

yes and wild beasts,
birds of the air and fish of the sea—
all that swims on the wet sea paths!

O thou Eternal One, our Lord,
what majesty is thine o'er all the world!

Psalm 8

Bless the Eternal, O my soul!

Eternal One, my God, thou art most great,
arrayed in glorious majesty.

Thou wrappest thyself in a robe of light,
thou spreadest the sky like a tent,
thou buildest thy chambers on the waters above;
thou makest clouds thy chariot,
thou ridest on the wings of the wind;
thou makest winds thy messengers,
fire and flame thy servants.

Thou didst found the earth upon its pillars,
never to be shaken,
drawing the deep over it,
till the waters rose over the mountains;
but they retired at thy rebuke,
scared at the sound of thy thunder,
never to pass thine appointed bounds,
or cover earth again;

the mountains rose, the valleys sank,
to the place thou madest for them.

He pours the streams into the valleys,
that flow between the mountains,
where all the wild beasts drink,
wild asses quench their thirst;
there the wild birds settle,
singing among the branches,
as the great trees drink their fill,
the cedars the Eternal sowed on Lebanon,
where birds build their nests,
the stork with her home in the cypress.

The high hills shelter the wild goat,
the marmot hides in the rocks.

He waters the hills from his high chambers,
and rains abundantly upon the land,
till grass grows for the cattle,
and fodder for the beasts that serve mankind;
that he may bring food from the earth,
wine to cheer up the heart of man,
oil, that his skin may shine,
bread to sustain his strength.

He marks the seasons by the moon,
he tells the sun when it must set.

Thou makest it dark; night falls,
and every wild beast in the wood is moving—
lions roaring for their prey
and claiming food from God;
when the sun rises, then they slink away
to lie down in their lairs,
but man comes out to work,
and labours till the evening.

How manifold thy works, Eternal One,
all of them wisely made!

Yonder the sea lies, vast and broad,
with its countless swarms,
with creatures small and great,
with fleets of the nautilus,
with leviathan at his play!

The world is full of thy creatures, all looking to thee
for their food in season due;
what thou givest, that they gather,
feasting from thine open hand.

But when thy face is hidden, they are scared,
when thou recallest their breath, they die.

Yet a breath from thee brings them into being,
renewing the face of the earth.

Psalm 104:1-30



CHAPTER 3

God as Source of Law

TRY TO imagine what it would be like to live in a universe without law and order. We would not know what to expect from one day to the next: whether the sun would rise every morning or once a week, whether our homes would remain on the ground or float up to the sky, whether the air would continue to be fit to breathe, whether our lives would be snuffed out like a candle. In such a world, we would be filled with fears of what might happen or fail to happen; life would be impossible.

Fortunately we live in a dependable universe, controlled by definite, unchanging laws. We take for granted the regularity of the solar system, the law of gravity, and countless other laws of nature. But there was a time, not so far back in human history, when these were not known or understood. Men had to observe the workings of the universe for centuries before they achieved any clear realization of the fundamental principles of physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy and other sciences. The marvels wrought by modern science have been made possible by man's faith that the universe is predictable and reliable—a faith that is continually being justified by new evidence.

We should remember, however, that these laws are not man-made. The source of the orderliness of the universe is the Eternal Mind we call God.

This is quite different from the idea of God held by various

other peoples in the past. The gods of the ancient Greeks and Romans, for example, were whimsical and unpredictable, often became angry or jealous, quarreled with one another and were supposed to interfere in human affairs without warning or apparent reason. The gods worshipped by primitive races were thought to be powerful but capricious, sometimes asleep, sometimes cruel, demanding that sacrifice, even human victims, be offered to attract their attention, appease their anger and win their favor. Even today the god of the Mohammedans is an absolute despot whose actions are arbitrary, without relation to justice. Such a concept is far below the insight of the great Hebrew prophets into the Eternal who has guaranteed the law-abiding structure of the universe, the Source of both physical and moral Law—unchanging, dependable, trustworthy, sure.

The first seer to recognize the law-abiding nature of the universe and its God was a Hebrew named Moses. He was born in Egypt, probably during the reign of Rameses II, more than 1300 years before Jesus was born. For a generation or more the Hebrews had been held as slaves by the Egyptian Pharaohs and were compelled by them to build their cities.

All the information we have about the early life of Moses is contained in legendary tales that were repeated by word of mouth for centuries until they were finally written down sometime after 900 B.C. Though the legends were doubtless exaggerated in being passed on, one indisputable fact stands out: here was a man of stature, with great genius for leadership, fired by a high sense of justice and by tremendous faith in the ultimate triumph of right over wrong. Because of his strength of character and clearness of vision, he became the organizer and founder of the Hebrew nation and one of the great lawgivers of all time.

According to the story in Exodus, the Egyptian Pharaoh at the time of Moses' birth had ordered the slaying of all male Hebrew infants, but he was saved from death and adopted by

the princess, being brought up as a member of Pharaoh's court. Modern scholars have discovered strong proof that Moses studied the writings of the Egyptian sages and knew the ancient worship of the sungod, Re, with its emphasis on truth and justice. More important, he was strongly influenced by the religious teaching of Akhenaton, who had reigned as Pharaoh about a century before.

This remarkable young king was the first to envision a universal, world religion. He reinterpreted the worship of the sun as the religion of Aton, the source of life-giving light, love, joy and truth. By royal decree Akhenaton tried to abolish all other forms of worship in Egypt. But at his death the embittered priests of the old religion returned to power, determined to wipe out his memory and the worship of Aton. Fortunately, however, enough of his teaching remained to reach the young Moses, and through him Akhenaton's ideas eventually became an influence in Hebrew religion. The striking resemblance between Psalm 104 and the ancient hymn to Aton inscribed about 1370 B.C. on the Amarna tombs proves that a later Hebrew poet was also inspired by the vision of this brilliant young Pharaoh.

In the account in Exodus, we are told that Moses watched the treatment of Hebrew slaves by their Egyptian taskmasters, becoming more indignant as "he noted the loads they had to bear." He was so enraged by the injustices he saw that he struck and killed an Egyptian who was mistreating a slave. Afraid that his deed would become known and that Pharaoh would have him executed, Moses fled to the land of Midian. There he took refuge with the priest of Midian named Jethro, married one of his daughters, and became the shepherd of his flocks.

During the years spent in exile, Moses seems to have reflected much about the nature of God. While he watched the sheep, there were long hours for meditation about the regular motions of the sun, moon and stars, and about the

ideas he had brought with him from Egypt. Doubtless he talked about religion with Jethro, whose worship of God as Yahweh centered on the mountain called Horeb or Mount Sinai. (The name Jehovah in many Bibles is a later spelling of Yahweh. Dr. Moffatt uses "the Eternal" throughout.)

Years later, after the heroic rescue of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt, it was up the side of this sacred mountain that Moses climbed to get instructions from God for the establishment of law and morals among the discouraged, helpless people who turned to him in the wilderness for leadership. The following selections from the Book of Exodus tell how he set up courts of law among his people, and became the spokesman of God for generations to come.

Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, came into the desert then, with the sons and the wife of Moses, to where Moses was camped, at the hill of God. Moses was told, "Here is your father-in-law Jethro coming to you, along with your wife and her two boys!"

So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed low before him and kissed him; then they asked for one another's health and went inside the tent, where Moses told his father-in-law all that the Eternal had done to the Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the distress they had suffered in their journey, and how the Eternal had preserved them. Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness of the Eternal to Israel, in rescuing them from the Egyptians.

Next day, as Moses was holding a popular court, with the people surrounding him from morning to night, the father-in-law of Moses noticed all his labour for the people, and said to him, "What is this you are doing? Why sit alone as a judge, with the people all around you from morning to night?" Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to get God's own decision in their cases; when-

ever they have any disputes, they come to me, I decide between one man and another, and let them hear the rules and directions of God."

The father-in-law of Moses said to him, "You are not doing right. You will wear yourself out, you and your people; this work is too heavy for you, and you cannot manage it alone. Now listen to me, let me advise you, that God may be with you; . . . represent God to the people, laying their cases before God, and instructing them in his rules and directions, letting them see how they are to live and what they are to do; but look out some capable men among the people, religious men, honest men, who scorn unjust profits, and appoint them to supervise groups of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens; let them act as judges in ordinary cases; they can refer any special case to you, and judge lesser matters by themselves. That will make things easier for you, as they share the work with you. If you do this, supposing that God so orders you, then you can stand the strain, and all the people will go home satisfied."

Moses listened to what his father-in-law said, and did exactly as he told him; he chose capable men out of all Israel, and put them at the head of the people, over groups of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens; they acted as judges in ordinary cases, deciding lesser matters by themselves, and referring difficult cases to Moses.

Exodus 18:5-9, 13-26

Leaving Rephidim, the Israelites reached the desert of Sinai, where they pitched camp in the desert; it was in the third month after leaving the land of Egypt . . . (There Israel pitched camp in front of the mountain, and Moses went up to God.)

The Eternal called to him from the mountain, saying, "Tell this to the house of Jacob, tell the Israelites: 'You have seen for yourselves what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you safe on eagle's wings and brought you hither to myself. Now then, if you will listen to what I say and keep my compact, you shall be my own prized possession among all nations (for all the world is mine), and you shall be a dynasty of priests for me, a sacred nation.' This is what you must tell the Israelites."

The Eternal added, to Moses, "I am coming to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear me speaking to you and always believe you also."

Then the Eternal descended on the mountain of Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the mountain of Sinai was all wrapped in smoke, as the Eternal descended in fire upon it; the smoke rose like steam from a kiln, till the people all trembled terribly.

Exodus 19:2, 1, 3-6, 9, 20, 18, 20

The establishment of law and justice has been a long, slow process that is still going on. Early codes of law inevitably had to be changed and improved as the Hebrews developed higher standards or came into contact with more advanced civilizations. Experts have distinguished seven different legal codes in the Bible, including two versions of the Ten Commandments. Nevertheless the principles underlying these ten great laws still form the basic rules of human conduct.

The chapters from Deuteronomy given below contain the most advanced statement of moral law in the Old Testament. They summarize the best thinking of Hebrew leaders from Moses down through the great prophets—a period of nearly six centuries. This summary was the work of some unknown prophet who hid his writing in the Temple during a period of persecution in the seventh century B.C. Years later

when the Temple was being restored, this scroll was found and became a fresh source of inspiration for idealism and religious enthusiasm. Because of Moses' great reputation as judge and lawgiver, this revision, like all changes in Hebrew law, was given to the people as the work of Moses, and the word of God.

This is no dry-as-dust listing of a legal code. The Book of Law is presented in the Bible as a solemn farewell address by Moses to the people when they came at last to the edge of the Promised Land. Perhaps its writer had the fragments of a speech which Moses actually delivered, or he may have adopted such a form because of the Hebrew love of oratory. At any rate, it constitutes one of the great speeches of all time, worthy of the heroic genius who had the vision to know that moral law is the expression not only of the best in man but of the will of God.

Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: "O Israel, listen to the rules and regulations which I announce in your hearing this day, that you may learn them and be careful to obey them. The Eternal our God has made a compact with us at Horeb; the Eternal made this compact, not with our fore-fathers but with ourselves, with us who are all here and now alive. The Eternal spoke to you face to face, out of the fire at the hill, while I stood between the Eternal and you, in order to report what the Eternal said—for you were terrified at the fire and would not ascend the hill. He said, 'I am the Eternal your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt, that slave-pen.'

" 'You shall have no gods but me.'

" 'You shall not carve for yourselves any idol, the shape of anything in heaven above, or on the earth below or in the sea; you shall not bow down to them nor worship them, for I the Eternal your God am a jealous God, punishing children

for the sins of their fathers, punishing those who hate me, to the third and the fourth generation, but showing kindness to thousands of those who love me and obey my orders.

“ You shall not use the name of the Eternal, your God, profanely; for the Eternal will never acquit anyone who uses his name profanely.

“ Keep the sabbath sacred, as the Eternal your God has ordered you. Six days you may labour and do all your business, but the seventh day is the sabbath in honour of the Eternal, your God, and on it you must not do any business, neither you nor your son nor your daughter, nor your slaves, male or female, nor your ox nor your ass nor any of your cattle, nor the alien who is among you. Your slaves, male and female, are to rest as well as yourselves. Remember that you were once slaves in the land of Egypt, and that the Eternal your God brought you out by sheer strength and main force. Hence the Eternal your God has ordered you to keep the sabbath.

“ Honour your father and your mother, as the Eternal your God has ordered you, that you may have a long life and that all may go well with you in the land which the Eternal your God is giving you.

“ You shall not murder, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor give false evidence against a fellow-countryman, nor lust after his wife, nor covet his household, his property, his slaves, male or female, his ox, his ass, or anything that belongs to a fellow-countryman.”

“ Listen, Israel: ‘the Eternal, the Eternal alone, is our God. And you must love the Eternal your God with all your mind and all your soul and all your strength.’ These words you must learn by heart, this charge of mine; you must impress them on your children, you must talk about them when you

are sitting at home and when you are on the road, when you lie down and when you rise up."

Deuteronomy 5:1-21; 6:4-7

"Beware of forgetting the Eternal your God by failing to obey his orders and regulations and rules, which I enjoin upon you this day; lest, when you have eaten and satisfied yourselves, when you have built grand houses to live in, when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold increase, and all you possess grows larger, then you turn proud and forget the Eternal your God . . .

"Beware of saying to yourselves, 'My own power and the strength of my own hand have won me all this wealth.' You must remember the Eternal your God, for it is he who gives you the power of gaining wealth, that he may ratify the compact which he swore to your fathers, as it is to-day. If ever you forget the Eternal your God and follow other gods, worshiping them and doing homage to them, then I testify against you this day that you shall be wiped out, wiped out like the nations which the Eternal is to wipe out before you, since you would not listen to the voice of the Eternal your God.

"Devote your heart to him then, and cease to be obstinate. For the Eternal your God is the supreme God, the supreme Lord, the great God, mighty and awful, never partial, never to be bribed; he secures justice for the orphan and the widow; and he loves an alien, giving him food and clothing. Love the alien, then; for once you were aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt."

Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17-20; 10:16-19

The hidden issues of the future are with the Eternal our God, but the unfolded issues of the day are with us and our children for all time, that we may obey all the orders of this law.

"For this command which I am enjoining upon you today is not beyond your power, it is not beyond your reach; it is not up in heaven that you should say, 'Who will go up for us and bring it down to us and let us hear it, that we may do it?'—nor is it over the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us and bring it to us and let us hear it, that we may do it?' No, the word is very near you, it is on your lips and in your mind, to be obeyed.

"Here have I put before you this day life and welfare, death and misfortune. If you listen to the orders of the Eternal your God which I enjoin upon you this day, to love the Eternal your God, to live his life, to follow his orders and rules and regulations, then you shall live and multiply, and the Eternal your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to occupy.

"But if your heart turns away, if you will not listen, if you are allured to worship foreign gods, bowing down to them, I tell you this day that you shall not live long in the land which you are crossing the Jordan to enter and occupy; here and now I call heaven and earth to witness against you that I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the curse: choose life, then, that you and your children may live, by loving the Eternal your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him, for that means life to you and length of days . . ."

Deuteronomy 29:29; 30:11-20

This high ethical concept of God as the Source of Law found expression time and again, as we shall see later, in the great prophets and in the Psalms. One of the most inspiring poems in the Bible is Psalm 19; its writer discovered God as Creator in the amazing universe around him (see page 12), and then went on to marvel at the vast system of law established by Him for man, as well as the stars, to obey.

The Eternal's law is a sound law,
reviving life;
the Eternal's is a trusty witness,
that instructs the open-minded;
the Eternal's orders are just,
a joy to the heart;
the Eternal's command is clear,
a light to the mind;
the Eternal's faith is a clean faith,
it will last for ever;
the Eternal's rulings are upright,
and altogether just—
more to be prized than gold,
than plenty of rare gold,
sweeter than honey itself,
than honey from the comb.
Yes, and by them thy servant takes warning;
in following them there is rich profit.
Yet who can detect his lapses?
Absolve me from my faults unknown!
And hold thy servant back from wilful sins,
from giving way to them.
Then blameless shall I be,
from many a transgression free.
May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my
heart
please thee, Eternal One, my strength and saviour.

Psalm 19:7-14



CHAPTER 4

God as Champion of Justice

THUS FAR we have peered into the outer fringes of the universe to grasp the magnitude of God the Creator, the vast Mind-Energy which established our world and created life upon it. We have come to realize also that this powerful Creator is not a blind, irresponsible force but the Source of a magnificent system of Law extending throughout the physical world and determining the difference between right and wrong in human relationships.

Now we shall climb mountaintops far above Mount Sinai, and in imagination stand with the great prophets of the Bible where we can survey human history and hear them interpret the fate of nations. For it is from such a vantage point that we should read the words of the prophets and reach some understanding of God as the Champion of Justice, who not only establishes moral law but insists upon obedience to it, who is forever on the side of truth and is resolved to punish those who wrong their fellow men.

Perhaps you think of a prophet as one who by gazing into a crystal ball or studying the stars predicts future events. But the true prophet is a man of far-reaching imagination who has stood as it were on the mountaintop of human thought and has searched far and wide for the meaning of the universe and the nature of God; he has observed long and minutely the passing procession of men and events in order to see clearly the direction of human history. Out of his

findings he speaks with the conviction of having discovered great truth.

Of such stature and spiritual grandeur were the prophets of the Old Testament who lived seven or eight hundred years before Jesus was born. These men had such clearness of vision and strength of character that they spoke fearlessly, regardless of the indifference or the scorn or the outright persecution they had to endure.

To understand why the idea of God as Champion of Justice was so revolutionary, we must go back to the earlier religious beliefs of the Hebrews. Like other primitive religions, the oldest sections of the Bible reflect a form of worship which centered in the offering of sacrifices or the performing of a ritual. The purpose of these ceremonies was to win the favor of the god or spirit whose help was needed for the growing of crops or the raising of sheep or the winning of battles. To fail in carrying out the ritual was to risk the displeasure of the ruling deity, which was thought to mean dire punishment and failure. The god whose favor was being invoked did not care whether the worshippers were honest or kind or merciful or fair to one another.

Primitive religion was solely a matter of form and ceremony; it had little to do with morality and the difference between right and wrong. Some forms of religion even today are more concerned about creed and ritual than they are about conduct.

The religion of the Old Testament did not remain on this lower level, however. After a thousand years or so came the handful of men who were to push the Hebrew religion to such heights that it has ever since occupied a place far above other religions of mankind in moral standards and spiritual vision. One after another, these men insisted that the Eternal, the true God of all the world, is not interested in the sacrificing of goats and bulls but in righteousness, in obedience to law, and in the just treatment of one's fellows. The prophets

were horrified to see their people trying to atone for their wickedness with burnt offerings and other meaningless motions. Here, they cried out indignantly, was an empty form which only dulled the conscience and blinded men to the need for repentance and right conduct.

And they went further in their indictment of the wickedness of their people. Because they were so firmly convinced that God is by nature righteous and therefore the Champion of Justice, they believed that there would sooner or later be a day of reckoning. They warned that a nation could not continue to break the Ten Commandments, bow before idols, commit murder, rob the poor, and be guilty of corruption, without eventually being punished. God would use their enemies to destroy their cities and enslave the people.

Because they were so certain that they knew right from wrong, the prophets regarded themselves as spokesmen of God. What they had to say was not the word of a man but the direct expression of the will of God. And time has proved the validity of their convictions.

As you read the selections from the prophets, imagine what it would be like to live in a world where both God and men were indifferent to injustice, cruelty and crime. Human beings have discovered time and again that life is not only unsafe but downright impossible in a community where there is no respect for law and little attempt to administer justice. Men cease to build when they fear that their work will be knocked apart. When legal protection fails, people become demoralized and life descends to the level of the jungle. While modern communities are far from perfect, we have nevertheless come a long way from the half-civilized world of 700 B.C. Human progress has been made possible by faith that the Eternal God is a righteous Judge whose power is exerted on the side of justice and fair play.

The first great prophets to proclaim the righteousness of God were Amos and Hosea, who denounced the dishonesty

and cruel injustices of their day. We shall read their messages in later chapters; we begin instead with selections from the prophet Micah, a plain-spoken peasant-farmer from a little village on the western edge of Judah. Micah saw his fellow peasants losing their land unfairly; he saw the corruption of the large cities, Samaria and Jerusalem; he saw judges and priests willing to accept bribes and thus corrupting both law and religion; and he cried out that God would not allow such wickedness to go unpunished.

Two centuries had passed since Solomon built the Temple at Jerusalem and ruled in splendor over the small empire established by his father, King David. Soon after Solomon's death, the Hebrew nation was torn in two by rebellion, ten tribes in the north forming the Kingdom of Israel, and the two remaining tribes known as the Kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem as their capital. Both Israel and Judah were destined to become pawns of a succession of conquering powers who ruled the ancient world: first the Assyrians, then the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and finally, the Romans.

To understand the messages of the prophets, we must visualize the geographical position of the tiny Hebrew state. Theirs was the position that Belgium has occupied in the twentieth century, the position of being locked in the pincers between the arms of contending giants, one on each side. And just as Belgium has been drawn into two World Wars, with nothing to gain and everything to lose, so centuries ago Israel and Judah were squeezed to death by forces that pressed upon them from the outside. And it was from those political and military events that the prophets drew insight and knowledge of the ways of God.

Micah was the first of the prophets to predict the destruction of Jerusalem. Within a few years after he spoke, the Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians, who captured its capital, Samaria, and carried away more than

27,000 Israelites into exile as slaves. The people of Judah continued to believe that they could ignore the warnings of the prophets because they thought themselves protected by the presence of the sacred Temple in Jerusalem. But in 586 B.C., nearly a century and a half after Micah's prophecy was spoken, the Babylonians destroyed the city and burned the Temple.

Attend, all nations
listen, O earth and all on earth!
The Eternal has a warning for you,
the Lord from his sacred temple on high.

Look, the Eternal descends from his place,
he strides on the heights of the earth!
Mountains melt away before him,
valleys split asunder,
like wax before a fire,
like water pouring over a fall—
“and all this for Jacob’s transgression,
for the sins of the house of Judah!
Jacob’s transgression? is it not in Samaria?
Judah’s sin? is it not in Jerusalem?
So I will have Samaria ploughed up [says the Eternal],
planted out with vines;
her stones I will pour down into the valley,
and lay bare her foundations,
shattering all her metal gods,
burning all her idols,
and ruining her shrines—
once the prize of faithless living,
now the prey of faithless foes.”

Woe to men who on their beds
some mischief plan,
and carry it out when morning comes,
because they can!—

coveting fields and seizing them,
coveting houses and snatching them,
crushing yeomen and their homes,
smallholders and their livings.

"Therefore," the Eternal declares,
"I plan something, plan a fate
from which you cannot shake you free,
nor rid you of its crushing weight:
so evil is the time.

Then shall you be taunted,
as this dirge is chanted:
'Undone! we are undone!
The soil of our folk is parcelled out,
past all restoring;
our captors are dividing up our fields.' "

"For talk like that you lose your share
in the community of the Eternal!
Stop it," they cry,
"such harping is not prophecy;
no shameful fate can e'er o'ertake the house of Jacob.
Is the Eternal's temper quick?
Is that how he would act?
Are not his words to Israel kind?"
The prophet for such folk
would be some empty fellow and a liar,
who promised to prophesy of wine and spirits!

You are the worst foes of my folk,
attacking peaceful men,
and plundering quiet passers-by,
evicting women from their happy homes,
branding their babes with slavery!

Away with you! begone!
this is no place for you!—depravity
shall ruin you beyond all remedy.

Listen now, leaders of Jacob,
judges over the house of Israel;
you haters of right and lovers of wrong,
is not a sense of justice due from you?
But they devour my people's flesh
and strip them of their skin,
laying bare their very bones,
chopping them up like flesh for the pot,
like meat in a cauldron.

One day they shall cry to the Eternal,
but he will never heed them;
he will hide his face from them,
for the crimes they have committed.

But I am full of strength and skill and courage,
inspired by the Eternal,
to let Jacob know its crimes,
and Israel its sins.

Leaders of Jacob, listen to this,
you judges over the house of Israel,
who spurn at justice and twist equity,
who build your Sion up with bloodshed
and Jerusalem on crime,
judges passing verdicts for a bribe,
priests pattering oracles for pay,
prophets divining for money,
and all the while relying on the Eternal,
saying, "Surely the Eternal is among us;
no evil can befall us!"

Therefore on your account
shall Sion be ploughed up like a field,
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
the temple-hill merely a wooded height.

Micah 1:2-7; 2:1-7, 11, 8-10; 3:1-4, 8-12

Here in the book of Micah is a vivid statement of God's demand for goodness rather than empty ritual, and the passage ends with the simplest yet one of the greatest definitions of religion ever written.

How shall I enter the Eternal's presence,
and bow before the God of heaven?
Shall I come to him with sacrifices,
with yearling calves to offer?
Would the Eternal care for rams in thousands,
or for oil flowing in myriad streams?
Shall I offer my first-born son for my sin,
fruit of my body for guilt of my soul?
O man, he has told you what is good;
what does the Eternal ask from you
but to be just and kind
and live in quiet fellowship with your God?

Micah 6:6-8

An even greater prophet than Micah, and more dramatic in his utterances, was the prophet Isaiah. He lived in Jerusalem and served as adviser to the kings of Judah during the latter half of the eighth century before Christ. No other man of the Old Testament had so great a sense of the high moral grandeur of God. Against the background of his vivid realization of God's holiness, Isaiah was keenly aware of the wickedness of his people.

He watched the rise of Assyrian power, the invasion of Israel in 721 B.C., and finally the attack on Jerusalem twenty years later. He tried in vain to change the course of events, but he believed that God was using the Assyrians with all their ruthless cruelty to punish the Hebrews for their own injustices and corruption. Later, Isaiah prophesies, God will turn on the Assyrians and punish them as well—a prophecy which came true with the destruction of Nineveh, the

Assyrian capital, by the Babylonians in 612 B.C. The record of history, ancient and modern, has proved that such is the fate of every proud, conquering nation which ignores moral law and lives by the jungle rule that might makes right.

"Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth"—
it is the Eternal speaking—

"I have reared, have brought up sons,
and they have rebelled against me;
a bullock knows its owner,
an ass its master's manger,
but Israel does not care,
my people never heeds me."

Ah sinful nation,
folk whose guilt is heavy,
ah race of wrongdoers,
sons degenerate—
they have abandoned the Eternal,
and spurned the Majesty of Israel!

"What care I for all your lavish sacrifices?"
the Eternal asks;

"I am sick of slaughtered rams,
of fat from fatted beasts;
the blood of bullocks and of goats
is no delight to me.

Who asked that from you,
when you gather in my presence?

Crowd my courts no more,
bring offerings no more;
the smoke of sacrifice is vain,
I loathe it;
your gatherings at the new moon and on sabbath,
I cannot abide them;
your fasts and festivals,
my soul abhors them,

they are a weariness to me,
I am tired of them.
You may stretch out your hands,
but I will never look at you,
and though you offer many a prayer,
I will not listen.
Your hands are full of bloodshed;
wash yourselves clean,
banish your evil doings
from my sight,
cease to do wrong,
learn to do right,
make justice all your aim,
and put a check on violence,
let orphans have their rights,
uphold the widow's cause."

Isaiah 1:2-4, 11-17

Woe to those who issue harsh decrees,
penning orders that oppress,
robbing the weak of their rights,
and defrauding the poor of their dues,
till widows fall to them as spoil,
and orphans as their prey.

He signals to a foreign power,
whistling for them from the end of the earth;
swiftly they come, speedily,
none tired, none tripping,
not a belt slack,
not a shoe-string broken,
arrows sharpened,
bows all bent,
horses' hoofs as hard as flint,
chariot wheels like whirlwinds—

growling like a lion,
 growling like young lions,
 gripping their victim with a growl,
 bearing it off, with none to rescue.

Woe betide this Assyria!
 He is my club in anger,
 the rod I wield in wrath;
 I speed him against an impious nation,
 a people with whom I am wroth,
 bidding plunder and spoil them,
 trample them down like mud in the street.
 "Since this people draw near me with their mouth,"
 says the Eternal,
 "honouring me with their lips,
 while their hearts are far remote;
 since their religion is a mockery,
 a mere tradition learned by rote;
 I will now deal with them to their amazement,
 bewildering, surprising them,
 till their wise men lose their wits,
 and their clever men are fooled."

Woe to the men who hide
 their plans from the Eternal,
 working in the dark, and thinking,
 "No one sees or knows!"
 Perverse creatures that you are!
 Is a potter no more than his clay?
 Dare anything deny its maker?
 Dare a pot hold the potter has no mind?

Isaiah 10:1, 2; 5:26-29; 10:5, 6; 29:13-16

Isaiah is said to have been put to death by the cruel King Manasseh who ruled Judah for forty-five years as a vassal of Assyria. Manasseh outlawed the prophets, and Jerusalem be-

came a pagan city where men worshipped idols and offered human sacrifice. When finally his grandson, Josiah, came to the throne, the darkest days in Hebrew history came to an end. This king cleared the Temple of idols and discovered hidden behind the altar the lawbook of Deuteronomy which thereupon became the basis for reform and a revival of true religion.

In 627 B.C. a new prophet began to speak. His name was Zephaniah, and his message again took up the theme of Micah and Isaiah. He saw in the barbaric Scythians from the north a new instrument of God's wrath, which would punish both the wickedness of Judah and the cruelty of the Assyrians. The last of the great Assyrian emperors, Ashurbanipal, had just died. The Scythian invasions weakened the already crumbling empire, Assyria's days were numbered, and the prophecies of earlier prophets were at last about to come true. Zephaniah describes with utmost vividness the coming of the Scythian hordes as the dawn of the terrible day of judgment upon the earth.

I will make a clean sweep of the earth,
the Eternal declares,
a clean sweep of man and beast, of bird and fish . . .
I will strike at Judah and at all dwellers in Jerusalem;
I will wipe out the last trace of Baal from this place,
and the very name of idol-priestlings,
those who bow upon the roof to the stars in heaven,
the devotees of the Eternal who swear by Milkom,
those who give up following the Eternal,
and those who seek not the Eternal, who never consult
him;

For I am searching Jerusalem with a lamp,
to punish careless men, living at ease,
who think the Eternal never does anything—
so their goods shall be plundered,
their houses laid in ruins . . .

The Eternal's great day is near,
near, speeding apace!
The Eternal's bitter day is near,
rushing on like a warrior!—
a day of wrath, that day, of woe and anguish,
a day of stress and distress, darkness and gloom,
a day of cloud and thundercloud,
a day of trumpet-blast and battle-cry
against towns fortified and ramparts high—
when men must grope like blind men, desperately,
because against the Eternal they rebelled;
their blood shall be scattered like dust,
their flesh like dung;
no silver and no gold avails
to protect them on the day of the Eternal's anger,
when the fire of his fury consumes the whole earth;
for a full end, ay a fearful end,
will the Eternal make of all on earth.

Zephaniah 1:2-6, 12, 14-18

The coming of the Scythians also inspired the early warnings of another and greater prophet, the young Jeremiah. As it turned out, Judah escaped actual invasion by these barbarian hordes who followed the coastal route to attack Egypt after their defeat of Assyria, and later hurriedly withdrew. But Jeremiah's work across forty perilous years witnessed one great catastrophe after another, including the rise of Babylon, the fall of Nineveh, and the destruction of Jerusalem. No man was more sensitive to the evils of his day than this brilliant, fiery, poet-statesman. Like a father who sees his family about to be swept away by a hurricane but cannot make them heed his warning, Jeremiah insisted that national disaster was inevitable. Yet none would listen.

How long must I see war-signals
and hear trumpet-blasts?

My people are senseless,
they care not for the Eternal;
dolts of a household,
devoid of understanding,
they well know how to do wrong,
but have no mind to do right.

I look out on earth—lo, all is chaos,
I look at heaven—its light is gone,
I look out on the mountains—they are reeling,
and all the hills are swaying!
I look out—lo, no man is to be seen,
the very birds have flown!
I look out—lo, the corn-land lies a desert,
the towns all razed by the Eternal's rage.

You have brought it all upon yourself
by the way you lived;
your evil drives it to your heart,
this bitter, mortal stroke.

Here is the Eternal's word:
“A people is coming
out of the north-land,
a power is stirring
from the far ends of earth!
Bow and javelin they seize,
they are cruel, pitiless;
their din is like the roaring sea,
they ride on horses,
mustering like one man
to fight you, maiden Sion.”

“We have heard the news,
and our hands are limp,
panic has seized us . . .”

Jeremiah 4:21-26, 18; 6:22-24

“Scour the streets of Jerusalem,
 search the squares and see
 if you can find a man of honest mind
 and true integrity.

They may swear, ‘As the Eternal lives!’
 but the oath is perjury.

“O thou Eternal, what thou lookest for
 is honesty, not falsehood.

Thou hast struck them, but they smarted not,
 they would not learn!
 they hardened themselves like a flint,
 they would not turn.

“‘But these are the poor,’ I said,
 ‘mere ignorant folk,
 who never learned the rules of the Eternal
 or the religion of their God.

I will turn to the upper classes,
 I will talk to them;
 for they have learned the rules of the Eternal
 and the religion of their God.’

But they had flung off all restraints,
 and broken every bond.

“So a lion from the jungle shall slay them,
 a wolf from the steppes;
 a leopard shall prowl around their towns,
 till he who ventures out is torn in pieces;
 for they have sinned repeatedly,
 and lapsed over and again.”

Jeremiah 5:1-6

Oh that I were in the wolds [desert]
 at a khan [inn] for wayfarers!
 For fain would I forsake my people
 and be quit of them!

They are adulterers, all of them,
a gang of faithless men;
they ply their tongues
like bows, for slander;
they are a power for dishonesty,
not for honesty, in the land.

They pass from one crime to another,
“ignoring me,” says the Eternal.

Beware of your neighbours,
let no one trust his brother;
for a brother will cheat like a Jacob,
and a neighbour will be slandering;
each deceives the other,
no one tells the truth,
they train themselves to lie,
these knaves and fools,
they oppress and oppress,
they deceive and deceive,
and—“they choose to ignore me,”
says the Eternal.

“Therefore”—the Lord of hosts declares—
“I must test them in the melting-pot;
for how can I overlook
my people’s crimes?
Their tongues are deadly arrows,
with their treacherous talk;
a man speaks to his neighbour peaceably,
and secretly he plots against him.
Must I not punish them for that?”
the Eternal asks;
“shall I not make such people
pay for that?

Raise a lament for the mountains,
 a dirge for the downs,
 wasted and emptied of men;
 no lowing of cattle in them—
 all creatures have fled and gone,
 both bird and beast;
 and Jerusalem I will turn into a heap of ruins,
 a mere haunt of jackals;
 the townships of Judah I will lay bare,
 till none dwells there."

Jeremiah 9:2-11

The insistent message of these prophets reaches a high point of dramatic power in Nahum's description of the fall of Nineveh, the proud capital of the Assyrians, which had been founded at least 1,700 years before. So complete was its destruction that the Greek historian Xenophon found only a great wall when he passed that way two centuries later, and even the name of the city had been forgotten. So perished one of the great militaristic empires of the ancient world. Modern statesmen may well take warning that such is the inevitable fate of every nation that tolerates corruption or oppression. After 2,500 years God is still the Eternal Champion of Justice.

An oracle on Nineveh: the book of the vision of Nahum of Elkosh.

An indignant, an avenging God is the Eternal,
 the Eternal is avenging, full of wrath!

To those who wait for him the Eternal is kind,
 a stronghold in the day of trouble;
 he cares for those who trust in him,
 and rescues them when the floods overflow.
 The Eternal is slow to be angry and rich in love,
 but never will the Eternal absolve guilt;

he makes an end of rebels,
and drives his enemies into the dark;
he has not to take vengeance twice upon his foes,
he makes an end of them.

Why plot against the Eternal?

The Eternal takes vengeance on his foes,
and retains anger for his enemies;
they are thorns cut and dried,
to be burned up like dry stubble.

Did he not come from you,
he with his plot against the Eternal,
he and his villainous plan?

So this is your doom from the Eternal:
“Your name shall no more be remembered,
I sweep idol and image from the temple of your god,
I make your grave a dunghill.”

A shatterer has come up against you!

Man your ramparts,
stand to attention, summon up your strength!
The shields of his heroes are crimson,
the soldiers are clad in scarlet,
his armoured chariots gleam like fire,
and their horses prance at the muster;
his chariots tear through the open country,
and gallop across the broad spaces,
flashing like torches,
darting like lightning;

Then he masses the picked men,
they charge ahead,
they rush to the wall,
and the mantlet is fixed;
the water-gates are forced,
the palace is in panic,
the queen is stripped and carried off,

her ladies mourning like doves,
beating their breasts—
and Nineveh lies like a pool of water,
with her folk flowing from her—
“Stand fast, stand fast!” they cry, but none turns back.

Loot the silver! Loot the gold!
no end to the plunder—
treasures all untold!
She is desolate, dreary, drained—
hearts are fainting, knees are shaking,
anguish settles on all loins,
black fear on all faces.

What has become of the Lion's den [Nineveh],
the lair of the young lions,
whither the Lion withdrew,
and the whelps with none to scare them?—
the Lion who tore enough for his whelps
and strangled for his mates,
till he filled his lairs with prey,
his dens with mangled carcases.

“I attack you,” says the Lord of hosts,
“I send up your lair in flames,
and the sword shall devour your cubs;
I will wipe your prey from the earth,
and the threats of your envoys shall be heard no more.”

...
“Ruined is Nineveh,” they say,
“none to lament her;
where can we find her any consoling?”

Assyria, your rulers are asleep,
your lords slumber in death!
Your people are scattered all over the hills,
with none to rally them.

You are shattered past repair,
wounded to death.

All who are told of you clap their hands over you;
for whom have you not wronged unceasingly?

Nahum 1:1, 2, 7, 8, 3, 8, 9, 2, 10,
11, 14; 2:1, 3-13; 3:7, 18, 19



CHAPTER 5

God as Merciful Judge

IF SOMEONE had done you a great wrong, had hurt you so deeply that you felt you could never forgive the injury, would you insist that the guilty person be punished until he has paid fully for his mistake? This is the usual demand for justice which one hears continually, not only in courts of law but in schoolyards, in homes, in business, in politics, in every walk of life.

This too was the immediate reaction of the Old Testament prophet Hosea. Of all men he had reason to be bitter. He had fallen deeply in love with a beautiful woman and married her. But she had other lovers who dangled gifts before her eyes and lured her away. So she left Hosea and had a daughter and a son by other men. And Hosea in grief and anger called the daughter "Nomercy" and the son "Nofolk," because he felt no mercy for his wife, and disowned both her and her children.

Then Hosea had an amazing experience. He discovered that, despite his wife's unfaithfulness, he loved her still and was willing to forgive her. He pleaded with her to return, assuring her that he wanted her as his wife.

This was not all. Because of his nobility of mind, Hosea reached fresh understanding of the nature of God. He discovered that it requires greater wisdom and strength of character to forgive than to condemn. To him came the realization that, if a man can find it in his heart to forgive a faithless woman, surely God in His infinite wisdom is willing to

forgive when people turn to Him for mercy. Thus through intense suffering due to no fault of his own, this heart-broken prophet caught a vision of a loving and merciful God who understands men and women, and tries to save them from their own mistakes, so that they can have the honor and joy of being "Sons of the Living God."

In the great trial scene of the Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Portia the famous speech in which she pleads with Shylock the moneylender to be merciful to the merchant who cannot repay the money he has borrowed and, by the terms of the loan, must forfeit his life. Here a great poet states the truth which Hosea had discovered 2,300 years before, that mercy

. . . is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

This appeal to the noblest in man has its roots back in the prophet Hosea, who first conceived of God as a merciful Judge. He was aware that God pities man's weakness, understands men's mistakes even better than they do themselves, and forgives with the hope of winning them to higher levels of thought and action.

This conviction that God is merciful did not grow out of a willingness on the part of the prophet to shut his eyes to the sins of his people. On the contrary, Hosea was keenly aware of the lawlessness and corruption of his time. His career as a prophet began about the middle of the eighth century B.C., soon after the time of Amos, the fiery peasant-prophet from Judah. Hosea may possibly have heard Amos

speak on one of his visits to Samaria or Jerusalem. Like the other prophets, Hosea foresaw the impending doom of his people; it was only twenty years after he spoke that Assyria destroyed Israel as a nation and carried off thousands into exile.

In his prophecies Hosea uses his own unhappy marriage as a symbol of Israel's sins and lack of devotion to the Eternal. With the genius of a poet he pictures the people of Israel (also called Ephraim after the leading tribe) as the faithless wife and God as the husband who has been deserted for other lovers. In the first selection, we hear Hosea denounce his unfaithful wife and declare that he will have no mercy on her children; then he describes God as passing similar judgment on Israel for having deserted true religion for idol-worship and the pagan festivals of Baal.

Argue it, argue it with your mother
(for she is no wife of mine,
and I am not her husband) . . .

On her children I will have no mercy,
for they are born out of wedlock;
their mother has played the harlot,
she who conceived them has been shameless;
she said, "I will follow my lovers,
who give me my bread and water,
my wool, flax, oil, and wine."
Little she knew it was I who had given her
the grain and oil and wine,
who had heaped on her silver and gold. . . .

I will lay waste her vine and fig-trees,
that she calls, "My own,
what my lovers paid for me";
into brushwood will I turn them,
and the wild beasts shall devour them.

I will bring all her gaiety to an end,
 her festivals, new-moons, and sabbaths,
 to punish her for all the days
 when to the Baals she offered incense,
 decking herself with rings and jewels,
 running after her lovers,
 and forgetting me, says the Eternal.

Hosea 2:1, 2, 4-8, 12, 11, 13

In another passage Hosea protests vigorously against the dishonesty, debauchery, cruelty, and immorality of his countrymen. Their crimes, he says, are due to lack of reverence for the God whom they had promised to serve. Bitterly he blames the priests for their dismal failure to give the people wise direction or understanding of the true God.

Israel, hear the word of the Eternal, for the Eternal has a charge to bring against the dwellers of the land:

No fidelity, no kindness,
 no knowledge of God in the land,
 nothing but perjury, lying and murder,
 stealing, debauchery, burglary—
 bloodshed on bloodshed!
 Hence the land is woebegone,
 its denizens all droop;
 even the beasts and birds
 and the very fish within the sea are perishing.

But none protests, no man complains,
 for my people are no better than their priestlings.
 You priests! You shall stumble by broad daylight;
 your day will I turn into night.

My people are dying for want of knowledge,
 and you reject my knowledge;
 so I reject you from my priesthood.

Since you ignore the instructions of your God,
I will ignore your children . . .

My people ask a piece of wood to guide them,
a pole gives them their oracles!
For a harlot-spirit has led them astray,
they have left their God for a faithless way.

They have been faithless to the Eternal,
bearing bastard children;
so shall a conqueror destroy
them and their acres.

Hosea 4:1-6, 12; 5:7

But the mood changes, Hosea has discovered that he loves his wife despite her infidelity, and succeeds in winning her back, even accepting her children as his own. So he imagines God trying to win back the people of Israel, making "the dale of trouble a door of hope," and helping them to understand Him not only as just but also as kind and merciful.

Now then I will block up her path
with a thorn-hedge,
and bar the road against her,
till she cannot find her way;
she will pursue her lovers and miss them,
seek them and never find them.
Then at last she will say,
"Let me go back to my first husband,
I fared better with him than to-day."

So I will allure her,
put her alone and apart,
and speak to her heart;
then I will restore her the vineyards,
and make the dale of Trouble a door of hope;
then shall she answer me

as in her youthful days,
 when she came up from Egypt's land;
 for I will take the name of Baals
 out of her lips, and then
 they shall never be mentioned again.

On that day, the Eternal declares, she shall call me, "My husband," no more "My Baal";

I will betroth her to me for ever,
 betroth her in a bond
 of goodness and of justice,
 in kindness and in love;
 yes, loyally will I betroth her,
 to let her understand the Eternal.

I will have mercy on Nomercy,
 to Nofolk I will say, "My folk,"
 and they shall say, "Thou art my God."

On Judah too I will have mercy,
 and rescue them as their God the Eternal,
 not by bow or sword or by munitions,
 not by horses or by cavalry.

The numbers of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea,
 that cannot be measured or counted;
 once it was said, "You are no folk of mine,"
 but now their name is "Sons of the Living God."

Hosea 2:6, 7, 14-20, 23; 1:7-10

In the following passage Hosea pictures God sadly remembering the nation in its youth, feeling the tenderness of a father who has taught his little sons to walk and has raised them with loving care, only to have them break away and rebel against his teachings. The father's first reaction, Hosea says, is one of quick anger, followed almost immediately by pity as soon as he sees a sign of remorse. Compassion be-

comes stronger than resentment, and Hosea, with the true vision of a prophet, imagines God rising above vengeance to the full height of divine love.

I loved Israel when he was young,
ever since Egypt I called him my son.
But the more I called to them,
the further they went from me,
sacrificing to Baals
and offering incense to idols.

Yet I taught Ephraim to walk,
holding them in my arms;
with human cords I led them,
I drove with a harness of love,
but, heeding not my care for them,
they broke away from me;
so I smote them on the face,
I turned against them, overbore them.
They must go back to the land of Egypt,
or Assyria must be their king;
the sword shall ply within their towns
and lay them low within their fortresses.

But my people are now weary of revolting,
they cry to me . . .
Ephraim, how can I give you up?
Israel, how can I let you go? . . .

My heart recoils,
all my compassion kindles;
I will not execute my anger fierce,
to ruin Ephraim again,
for I am God, not man,
I am among you, the Majestic One,
no mortal man to slay.

Come back to your God, O Israel,
 for your faults have made you fall.
 Take words, as you come back to the Eternal,
 saying to him:
 "All our iniquities forgive,
 and grant us now thy favour;
 let us bring thee flocks of the fold,
 for in thee the forlorn finds pity.
 Assyria never can save us;
 we will not take to war-horses for aid,
 and we will say no more 'My God'
 to what our hands have made."

Hosea 11:1-9; 14:1-3

Hosea's message to his people and to the world from that day to this is summed up in these two great sentences:

So I instruct them by my words,
 this precept shines out plain:
 love I desire, not sacrifice,
 knowledge of God, not any offerings.

Sow justice for yourselves,
 and reap a harvest of God's love;
 break up your fallow ground,
 by seeking knowledge of the Eternal;
 you must seek the Eternal,
 till he comes to rain salvation on you.

Hosea 6:5, 6; 10:12

Not all the people of Israel and Judah heard or believed the message of Hosea. The majority even today seem to be unaware that "earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons justice," that forgiveness is far nobler than a spirit of vengeance. However, the writer of Psalm 130 realized clearly the need of human beings for mercy and, like Hosea,

had faith in the love of God and in His power to transform personality.

Out of the depths I call to thee, O thou Eternal;

Lord, listen to my cry,

let thine ears heed my entreaty.

If thou didst keep strict tally of sins,

O Lord, who could live on?

But thou hast pardon,

that thou mayest be worshipped.

So I wait in hope for the Eternal,

my soul waits hoping for his promise;

my soul looks for the Lord

more eagerly than watchmen for the dawn . . .

Psalm 130:1-6

In the little Book of Jonah is additional understanding of the mercy of God, going even beyond the message of Hosea. Written by an unknown prophet about 400 years later, in the fourth century before Christ, this story makes one of the few pleas in the Old Testament for the forgiveness of one's enemies. Although the narrative is fictional, the author gave to his hero the name of an actual prophet who had lived hundreds of years before. Whether the historical Jonah ever took a sea voyage or visited Nineveh we do not know. We can safely assume that the hero of the Book of Jonah was created by the author, just as Walter Scott created Ivanhoe. What is important here is not the name of the hero nor his miraculous rescue from the whale but the magnificent message with its true insight into the nature of God.

Here then is one of literature's greatest short stories, written not for entertainment but for a purpose: to show that God is interested not only in the people of Israel but in all nations, that He is sorry for those who do not understand His laws, and that He is willing to forgive even His enemies

if only the people will change their ways and ask for help. Jonah is told to go to the most wicked city in the world, Nineveh, with the warning that God will destroy it utterly unless its people repent.

In the selection beginning on page 43 Nahum described vividly the fall of Nineveh, the mighty capital of the Assyrian Empire. No one regretted the downfall of so cruel a conqueror as Assyria; on the contrary, other nations rejoiced in the destruction of so wicked a city. The author of the Book of Jonah could not have chosen a more dramatic setting in which to show God's mercy and His desire that men should forgive their enemies.

Jonah, however, felt no personal sympathy whatever for the people of Nineveh. Rather than visit them as God had told him to do, he boarded a ship and traveled in the opposite direction. He would rather have died than accept the fact that God was willing to spare the city.

This message from the Eternal came to Jonah the son of Amitai: "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and thunder in their ears that their wickedness is known to me."

But Jonah went away to fly to Tartessus, from the presence of the Eternal; he came down to Jaffa, and when he found a ship there sailing for Tartessus, he paid his fare and went on board to reach Tartessus with the crew, avoiding the presence of the Eternal. But the Eternal flung a furious wind upon the sea; there was a heavy storm at sea, and the ship thought she would be broken. The sailors were scared; each cried to his own god, and they flung the tackle of the ship overboard, in order to lighten her.

Now Jonah had gone below and was lying fast asleep. The captain came upon him, and said to him, "What are you doing asleep? Get up and call upon your god! Perhaps he will give a thought to us and save us."

Then they said, one to another, "Come on, let us cast lots to find out who has brought this trouble upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. They asked him, "Tell us now, what are you doing here? Where do you come from? What is your country, and what is your nation?"

So he told them, "I am a Hebrew, I worship the Eternal, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

Then the men said to him in terror, "Whatever have you done?" (for they discovered that he was flying from the Eternal; Jonah had told them that). They said, "What are we to do with you, to make the sea calm?" (for the seas were running higher and higher).

"Take me and throw me into the sea," he said; "that will bring a calm. I see it is I who have brought this storm upon you." But the men dug in their oars, to row the ship to land. Only, they could not, for the seas ran higher and higher against them.

So they cried to the Eternal, "O Eternal, we beseech thee, let us not perish for taking this man's life; punish us not for a murder. Thou hast thyself brought this about, O Eternal." Then, lifting Jonah, they flung him into the sea; the sea ceased from its fury, and the men, in great awe of the Eternal, sacrificed to him and made vows to him.

Now the Eternal ordered a great fish to swallow Jonah, and for three days and three nights Jonah lay in the belly of the fish. From the belly of the fish Jonah prayed thus to the Eternal his God:

"Out of my anguish I called to the Eternal,
and he answered me;
from the belly of Death I cried,
and thou didst hear my voice.
Thou hadst flung me down, deep in the sea;

the floods rolled round me,
all thy breakers and billows swept over me;
I thought I was flung out of thy sight,
never to see thy sacred shrine again.
The waters closed to choke me,
the deep rolled round me,
seaweeds wrapped my head,
I sank to the very roots of the mountains,
to a land where bars shut behind me for ever.
But from the pit thou didst lift my life,
O Eternal my God.

When I lay fainting,
I remembered the Eternal,
and my prayer reached thee,
reached thy sacred shrine.

Those who heed vain idols leave their real refuge,
but I will sacrifice to thee with loud thanksgiving;
what I have vowed I will perform,
for 'tis the Eternal who delivers."

Then the Eternal spoke to the fish, and it threw up Jonah on the dry land. For the second time the Eternal sent this message to Jonah: "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim there what I tell you."

So Jonah rose and went to Nineveh, as the Eternal ordered. Nineveh was a great, great city, three days' journey across, from one side to another; Jonah made his way into it for one day, and then began to shout, "Forty days more and Nineveh falls!" He then went outside the city to the east, where he made a hut for himself and sat down under it in the shade, to see what would happen to the city.

But the folk of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the highest to the lowest. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, doffed his royal robe, covered himself with sack-

cloth, and sat down in ashes. He also sent heralds to cry through Nineveh: "By order of the king and his nobles! Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep, shall taste anything, food or drink; they must put on sackcloth and call earnestly on God. Everyone must turn from his evil life and from the violence he has in hand. Who knows if God will not relent and turn from his hot anger, to save us?" When God saw what they were doing, and how they turned from their evil life, God did relent; he decided not to inflict the punishment he had said he would inflict upon them.

This vexed Jonah mightily. He was angry, and he prayed to the Eternal: "Ah, Eternal One, did I not say so, when I was still at home? That was why I fled to Tartessus. I knew thou wert a gracious and pitiful God, slow to be angry, rich in love, and ready to relent! Now then, O Eternal, take my life away. Better death than life!"

"Are you right to be angry?" said the Eternal. The Eternal then made a gourd spring up, to shade his head (that Jonah might have ease). Jonah was mightily glad of the gourd. But next morning at dawn, God made a worm which gnawed the gourd till it withered, and at sunrise God sent a sweltering east wind; the sun beat on the head of Jonah, till he fainted and longed to be dead. "Better death than life!" he cried. Then God asked Jonah, "Are you right to be angry over the gourd?"

"Yes," said Jonah, "mortally angry." So the Eternal said to him, "You are sorry about the gourd, though you spent no toil upon it, you never made it grow—a gourd that sprang up in a night and perished in a night! And am I not to be sorry for that great city, Nineveh, with over a hundred and twenty thousand infants in it who know not their right hand from their left, and with all its cattle?"

How absurdly childish Jonah is made to appear compared with the great-hearted compassion and mature mercy of God!

It was only a few centuries later that Jesus tried to make people understand that it is better to overcome evil with good than to continue an endless chain of hate and vengeance. Not only did Jesus trust confidently in the mercy of God, but he urged men to be generous, forgiving, tolerant, good-natured in their treatment of one another. Then only, he said, would they be true sons of God.

"You have heard the saying, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you, you are not to resist an injury. . . .

"You have heard the saying, 'You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven:

he makes his sun rise on the evil and the good,
and sends rain on the just and the unjust."

"No, you must love your enemies and help them,
you must lend to them without expecting any return;
then you will have a rich reward,

you will be sons of the Most High—
for he is kind even to the ungrateful and the evil.

Be merciful,
as your Father is merciful."

Matthew 5:38, 39, 43-45
Luke 6:35, 36

The world has not yet learned to take seriously the story of Jonah or the teaching of Jesus.



CHAPTER 6

God as Shepherd

ON THIS planet called the earth there are some two billion men, women and children. If we count back through the generations that have lived before us, we soon reach so large a figure that the human mind cannot grasp it. When from this computation we move on to a consideration of the vast stretches of the universe, its countless stars, planets and solar systems, spinning through space for millions of years, we may well wonder whether a single individual human life can possibly have any value or importance whatsoever.

Far back in human history when the number of generations was fewer, and before so many star-worlds were visible through high-powered telescopes, men with imagination questioned the meaning of human life and expressed doubt as to the worth of the individual. Throughout the Psalms there are echoes of this realization of man's brief existence and frailty:

Poor man! his days are like the grass,
he blooms like a flower in the meadow;
at the breath of a breeze it is gone,
and its place never sees it again.

Psalm 103:15, 16

Year after year thou sowest men like grass that grows anew,

that in the dawn is fresh and flourishing,
then by twilight fades and withers.

Psalm 90:5, 6

In the Book of Ecclesiastes too, we find human life cynically described as being utterly meaningless and futile. One of the strangest books of the Bible, this was the work of a wealthy old man residing in Jerusalem about two hundred years before Jesus was born. Personal disappointments had evidently made him bitter and skeptical. Everywhere about him, in religion as well as in politics, he saw corruption, injustice, and oppression; and lacking faith in God or man, he saw no hope of improvement or progress.

Utterly vain, utterly vain,
everything is vain!

Man labours at his toil under the sun;
what does he gain?

The generations come and go,
but there the earth is, there shall it remain.

I set myself to study and survey thoughtfully all that goes on under heaven—a sorry task this toil set to the sons of men by God! I have seen all that goes on in this world; it is a vain, futile business.

Ecclesiastes 1:2-4, 13, 14

Against the background of sheer numbers and immeasurable time and space, the individual man seems insignificant indeed. Is it then possible to imagine a God all-wise and all-powerful enough to create a vast, complex universe controlled by law, who at the same time can take a personal interest in a man or a child? Surely, many will say, this is expecting too much; such a notion is the exaggerated imagining of a conceited mind, inflated with the idea of its own importance.

Here then is one of the toughest problems, one of the

deepest mysteries, that we have to tackle in our attempt to understand the nature of God. It is like trying to decide which end of the telescope to look into in order to get a true sense of perspective. We do not want to deceive ourselves that human beings are of more value than they really are. We do not want to be deluded in the name of religion, for it is to religion that we should be able to turn for true standards of value.

Moreover, we are face to face with a crucial question that is not theoretical but highly practical. We live in a time when the people of one country after another are required to give up the idea that individuals are important, and to be submerged in the mass. Obedience to the State is considered more essential than freedom, unity of thought and action more urgent than differences of opinion and open discussion. The rights of the individual, we are told, must be sacrificed for the good of the whole.

This is the claim of every dictatorship. Actually this concept is not modern but ancient, going back thousands of years to the complete domination of clan, tribe, or nation over its members. Among primitive peoples—the early Hebrews, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, even the American Indians—the group was all-important and a single person had no meaning, no rights, no hopes, except those of the group. All customs, laws, plans were laid down by authority to be followed unquestioningly, and all shared in good or evil fortune as trees share the sunshine or the rain that falls.

Early efforts to understand God fitted into this pattern. Moses worshipped a God who addressed Himself to the nation of Israel, a God who was interested in delivering from Egypt not individuals but a people. He guided the people through the wilderness and gave laws which all were to obey in order that the nation as a whole might survive and prosper. When anyone broke the laws, not only he was punished, but other members of his family as well. As you may

have noticed in the Ten Commandments, God is quoted as saying that He will punish not only sons but grandsons and even great-great-grandsons for the sins of their fathers.

When the great prophets denounced immorality and wickedness among the people, it was not individuals here and there they warned of the wrath to come. It was the entire nation—men, women and innocent babes—that would be destroyed by conquering armies as punishment for the collective sins of the group. Thus for thousands of years the destiny of individual men and women, boys and girls, was submerged in the destinies of entire nations.

Those who stood out from the mass, refusing to conform to accepted standards or beliefs, did so at the risk of unpopularity, persecution, and even death itself. We can be certain, therefore, that the prophets were men of extraordinary strength of mind and character; they believed so intensely in the importance of their message that they insisted upon proclaiming the truth they saw, regardless of consequences.

One of these brave men (as we have already seen on page 39) was Jeremiah, who tried to warn both king and people that the little kingdom of Judah would be conquered by the Babylonians and Jerusalem would be destroyed. Jeremiah found himself friendless and deserted by the very people he was trying desperately to save. In his utter loneliness he turned to God as the one great Mind who could understand and help him. Out of his own experience he knew that God listened. Thus Jeremiah was one of the first to realize that a personal relationship existed between himself and God. This faith he stated with full confidence, making free use of the personal pronouns "I" and "me."

Eternal One, thou knowest me,
remember me, care for me;
take vengeance for me on my persecutors,
strike instantly in anger;

remember, 'tis for thy sake I am taunted
by creatures who despise thy word.

But I delight in it, my very soul thrills at thy word;
for I belong to thee,

O thou Eternal, God of hosts.
I never joined the jesting band,
I never rioted;
I sat alone under thy hand,
sharing all thine indignation.
Why then do I suffer ceaselessly,
why does my wound fester?
Wilt thou really disappoint me,
like a stream that runs dry?

This was the Eternal's answer:
"If you will give up murmuring,
I will restore you to my service;
if you will purify yourself from passion's dross,
then you shall be my spokesman.
Let other men come over to your side,
but go not over to join them.
I will make you a rampart of a fort
to resist this people;
they shall attack you but not master you,
for I am with you to succour you;
I will deliver you from evil men,
and free you from the clutches of the cruel."

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Then came the actual exile of which Jeremiah and other prophets had warned, and the little nation which had been accustomed to worshipping God as a group, in specific places, found itself widely scattered. Among those carried off into captivity was the prophet Ezekiel. His was the difficult task of reassuring the discouraged people and of maintaining their faith in God, a religion which some believed to have

been utterly destroyed when the Temple at Jerusalem went up in flames. Out of the ruins of their ancient religion, however, a new faith gradually developed, the belief that God was concerned not only about the nation as a whole but about individual members wherever they were and whatever their fate.

The prophet Ezekiel had a lively imagination and used pictures, symbols, and allegories to capture the attention and bolster the faith of the unhappy prisoners in a foreign land. For twenty-five years, 592 to 567 B.C., he wrote and preached on the banks of the Grand Canal in Babylon. One of his allegories became the subject of a great painting by Michelangelo, who called it *The Vision of Ezekiel*. Another is contained in the selection below; here he describes God as accusing the leaders of Israel of being selfish, greedy shepherds: they have failed to care for His people and have allowed them to be killed or scattered. Therefore, says Ezekiel, God Himself will become the great, good Shepherd who will search for the lost and gather together His anxious flock.

This word from the Eternal also came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the rulers of Israel, prophesy thus to these shepherds: 'Here is what the Lord the Eternal says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have fed none but themselves! Ought not shepherds to feed their flock? You have seized the milk, you have clothed yourselves with the wool, you have killed the fatlings, but you have not fed the flock. You never put strength into the weak, you never healed the sickly, you never bandaged the cripples, you never recovered those who had been driven away, you never looked for those who were lost, and you were rough to those who were strong. So my flock has been scattered because they had no shepherd, and it has been devoured by all the wild beasts.'

"I am against the shepherds, I will demand my flock back from them, I will stop them from tending my flock; no

longer shall the shepherds feed themselves, I will rescue my flock from their greed, and no longer shall it be food for them.'

"For this is what the Lord the Eternal says: 'I myself, I will search for my flock and look for them. As a shepherd looks for his flock on the day when his sheep have been scattered, so will I search for my flock and bring them safe from all the places whither they have been scattered on a day of clouds and darkness; I will gather them out of the nations and collect them from foreign lands and bring them into their own land, feeding them on the uplands of Israel, in the valleys, and in all habitable parts of the country. I will feed them upon good pasture; their grazing shall be on the uplands of Israel, where they shall lie down in a good place and graze on rich pasture amid the heights of Israel. I myself will tend my flock, I will take them to their pasture,' says the Lord the Eternal.

"I will look for the lost, I will recover those who have been driven away, I will bandage the cripples, I will put strength into the sick, and I will guard the strong and prosperous, attending to them properly.' "

Ezekiel 34:1-5, 10-16

This marked another long step in the understanding of God. The shepherd not only watched over the flock and led it to new pastures, but knew all the sheep intimately, recognized each one at a glance, was quickly aware if one was missing, and went in search of lost or straying members of the flock. To believe in God as Shepherd, therefore, is to have faith that God is aware of individuals, one by one, and regards each human being as infinitely precious.

One of the most beautiful and inspiring bits of poetry in the Bible is the following selection from the second great Isaiah who announced that the long exile in Babylon was

about to end, and that God would bring His people back across the desert to their native land.

Hark! there is one calling, "Clear the way
for the Eternal through the waste,
level a highroad for our God
across the desert;
every valley must be filled up,
every mountain and hill lowered,
rough places smoothed,
and ridges turned into a plain . . .

"Up to the high hills,
O herald of happiness to Sion!
Raise your voice loudly,
O herald of happiness to Jerusalem,
raise it fearlessly,
and tell the towns of Judah,
'Here is your God!
Here is the Eternal coming in power,
maintaining mightily his cause!
Here he is bringing what he has won,
bringing what he has gained!
For he feeds his flock like a shepherd,
and gathers them in his arms,
he is carrying the lambs in his bosom,
and leading the ewes gently.' "

Isaiah 40:3, 4, 9-11

The Psalm which is probably known and loved by more people than any other begins confidently with the line, "The Lord is my shepherd" (King James Version). Here is complete and unquestioning faith that God knows each human being, understands each one's needs and difficulties, and lavishes upon each His constant care. The poet describes God as a gracious host entertaining an honored guest within His household. We do not know when or by whom the

Twenty-Third Psalm was written, but it belongs to a group of Psalms that were collected about a hundred years after Isaiah of Babylon wrote the passage above. The new translation by Dr. Moffatt gives even greater meaning to this famous psalm.

The Eternal shepherds me,
I lack for nothing;
he makes me lie in meadows green,
he leads me to refreshing streams,
he revives life in me.

He guides me by true paths,
as he himself is true.

My road may run through a glen of gloom,
but I fear no harm, for thou art beside me;
thy club, thy staff—they give me courage.

Thou art my host, spreading a feast for me,
while my foes have to look on!

Thou hast poured oil upon my head,
my cup is brimming over;
yes, and all through my life
Goodness and Kindness wait on me,
the Eternal's guest
within his household evermore.

Psalm 23

This same confidence in God's knowledge of individual human beings is expressed in many of the Psalms, but nowhere more beautifully than in Psalm 139.

Thou searchest me, Eternal One, thou knowest me,
thou knowest me sitting or rising.
my very thoughts thou readest from afar;
walking or resting, I am scanned by thee,
and all my life to thee lies open;
ere ever a word comes to my tongue,

O thou Eternal, 'tis well known to thee;
thou art on every side, behind me and before,
laying thy hand on me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is far, far beyond me.

Psalm 139:1-6

Here is a mystery far greater than that surrounding molecules and atoms, which scientists have been able to break apart and control. How the mind of man is related to the mind of God, so that human endeavor can be guided and stimulated to high achievement, this is indeed the miracle of our world. The English writer, Thomas Carlyle, went through a painful period of doubt, but he emerged with the same conclusion as the psalmists:

"We touch heaven when we lay our hand on a human body!" This sounds much like a mere flourish of rhetoric; but it is not so. If well meditated, it will turn out to be a scientific fact; expression, in such words as can be had, of the actual truth of the thing. We are the miracle of miracles—the great inscrutable mystery of God. We cannot understand it, we know not how to speak of it, but we may feel and know, if we like, that it is verily so."

Unwillingness or failure to realize that God is concerned with individuals, thereby denying the worth and importance of human personality, results in the cynicism and futility we found in Ecclesiastes. It finds expression in the meaningless view of life which says, "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." It produces a civilization in which human life is cheap, and strong men seize power in order to exploit the weak in ruthless jungle fashion.

On the other hand, to accept the historic fact that God has demonstrated continually His concern about individuals, and from this to believe in the sacredness of human personality, opens the way to hope and confidence in the future

of mankind, regardless of its weaknesses and past failures. It gives to every human being the assurance that his life has worth and possibilities, amazing resources of power being available for the asking. It places upon each individual the responsibility of rising to the full height of his possibilities, and thus living up to his heritage as a person created in the likeness of God.

Such a faith in the dignity of man gave rise to the ideals of freedom and democracy to which men have been willing to pledge their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor. This faith forms the foundation of social progress with its goals of universal education, the care of the sick and the helpless, the protection of the weak, and the establishment of equal justice for all.

Jesus was undoubtedly familiar with the selections from Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Psalms just given. And he went further in his insistence on the worth of individuals, declaring that God's concern extended beyond the limits of class or nation or race, that it reached every man, woman and child in the world. So valuable is each one, said Jesus, that the hairs on every head are numbered!

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?

Yet not one of them is forgotten by God.

But the very hairs on your head are all numbered;

fear not, you are worth far more than sparrows."

Luke 12:6, 7

"Tell me, if a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays, will he not leave the ninety-nine sheep on the hills and go in search of the one that has strayed? And if he happens to find it, I tell you he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that a single one of these little ones should be lost."

Matthew 18:12-14



CHAPTER 7

God as Spirit

ALL of us enjoy watching a magician at work. He shows us an empty box, invites someone to examine it, then a moment later pulls out a big, white squirming rabbit, very much alive. He hides an orange under a cylinder on one side of the stage, and then, with a tap of his magic wand, makes it appear on a table twenty feet away. He cuts a rope in two, ties the pieces together, rolls them up, and then while you are still watching, unrolls them as one unknotted rope.

We know that we are being fooled. The magician does not actually produce a rabbit out of thin air, or transfer the orange invisibly from one place to another, or mend the rope by saying "Abracadabra" over it. With the aid of special equipment he has developed the skill of making objects appear different from what they really are. We enjoy watching him for an hour, we would like to know how the tricks are done, but we would not want to live continually in the magician's world.

Yet we are learning from the modern scientist that we actually do live in a world where things are not what they seem, where unseen forces work continually in amazing ways, where it is impossible to determine what is real by the ordinary tests of sight and sound and touch. You no doubt think of a baseball bat as a solid and dependable object. You can see it, feel it, weigh it, measure it, smell or taste it, and if you have the skill you can knock out a home run with it. There

is no doubt in your mind about the reality of that bat. Yet the physicist tells us that this piece of wood which looks solid and substantial is not solid stuff at all; it is nearly all empty space. Scattered in that space, like very tiny particles of dust in an almost empty tube, are numerous electric charges called electrons and protons which are rushing about at enormous speed; "their combined bulk amounts to less than a billionth of the bulk"^{*} of the baseball bat itself. Thus the science known as physics is concerned with "a world of shadows." The unseen forces which hold electrons and protons together into atoms, and atoms into molecules, form all the substances of the world we see about us.

On a summer evening you sit quietly with a group of friends on a hillside, with only the stars overhead. You hear nothing but the sound of crickets and the voices of your companions. Everything seems peaceful and you think yourself in a very quiet place until suddenly someone turns the dial of a portable radio; immediately the air is filled with sounds which may be coming from miles away. The vibrations were in the ether waves around you all the time—real and undeniable—even though you did not hear them.

It is difficult at times to believe that anything is real if we cannot see it, touch it, feel it, measure it. Yet supremely important things we do accept without such proof: thoughts, ideas, friendships, loyalties. To be sure, you can describe the outward appearance of someone you love, but you have never seen the inner personality, the invisible mind that thinks of you and understands you and will survive all manner of physical change. Even though it is impossible to put this love into a package and tie it up as you would a precious jewel, you know that here is an unseen force that affects you vitally, influencing thought, speech, and action.

In addition to love there are other unseen forces which

* A. S. Eddington, *Nature of the Physical World* (Macmillan, 1940), p. x.

have always had far more influence than guns and bullets or other physical forces. Men devote their lives to the search for truth. Thousands have been willing to die for what they thought to be right and good. Artists, musicians, poets spend years developing the means by which to express beauty of sound or color or idea. Love, truth, goodness, justice—all these are spiritual values as invisible as electrons and even more powerful, not only molding individuals but affecting the destiny of nations.

This realization of the existence and influence of unseen forces makes it possible for us to take another long step in understanding the nature of God. To be sure, we started out by agreeing that He is not like Santa Claus, but the temptation is strong to think of Him as existing in some visible form embodied somewhere in our universe. Yet to think of Him in such terms is to become so confused as to prevent the deeper understanding we are seeking.

Since the Bible is a record of man's efforts to comprehend the universe and the forces which affect life, we find in it evidence of all the mistakes which people have fallen into in thinking of God. For example, there has always been the temptation to make some kind of image or idol to represent God. Moses came down from Mount Sinai to find the people worshipping a golden calf. The Second Commandment definitely forbade the making of idols in any form whatsoever. Yet the desire for a visible and tangible object was so strong that not only the Hebrews but other nations have at various times fashioned devices made sacred by ritual. Even today the people of India, China and Ceylon have images which are considered holy as soon as eyes have been studded in them and the priests have conjured the spirit of their gods to enter therein. In parts of China life is imparted to an idol by inserting small animals in a hole at the back of the statue.

But the great leaders of biblical history never allowed their people to remain on this low level of understanding. They

thundered against the use of idols as blind and futile, and insisted upon a higher, truer vision of the God of the universe, not as a figment of metal or stone, but as the Creator of all life. To them God was the living Source of Law and Wisdom, the Champion of Justice and Mercy: no unfriendly and impersonal mechanism, but the great Shepherd who is concerned about each individual human personality. Unlimited in location, He was the universal Spirit of love, truth, goodness, beauty, so vast as to surpass the mind of man, yet so near that in Him "we live, and move, and exist."

In these selections from Jeremiah and the Book of Isaiah the folly of worshipping a helpless wooden idol is contrasted with the vast spiritual power of the Eternal. A section of Psalm 139 also describes a poet's vision of God as universal Spirit.

Listen to the word of the Eternal for you, O House of Israel; here is what the Eternal says:

Never learn to live like pagans,
dismayed at portents in the sky;
pagans are dismayed at them,
but their rites are inane.

Here is a tree felled from the forest,
trimmed by a woodman's axe,
decked out with silver and with gold,
with plates of silver from Tartessus,
with gold from Ophir,
all jewellers' and joiners' work,
decked out in violet and purple cloth,
the work of craftsmen,
then propped with nails and hammer,
to keep it from falling!

Idols are like scarecrows in a field,
they cannot say a word;
they have to be carried,
for they cannot move a step.

Have no fear of them; they cannot hurt you—
no, nor help you!

But the Eternal is the real God,
a living God, an everlasting King; . . .

who by his power made the earth,
who by his wisdom founded the world,
and by his knowledge spread heaven out;
when he thunders, the heavens are in tumult,
he makes mists rise from the ends of the earth,
he flashes lightning through the rain,
and brings wind from his storehouses.

It strikes man dumb and senseless;
the goldsmith is ashamed of his carved image,
his metal image is a futile thing.

There is no breath of life in idols;
they are a vain delusion,
they break down when the test arrives—
not like him who is Jacob's own possession;
for he who formed the universe is Jacob's God,
his name is the Lord of hosts.

Jeremiah 10:1-4, 9, 4, 5, 10, 12-16

Then whom can you compare with God?
What can you put beside him?
A metal image?—that the workman casts,
the goldsmith gilds,
everyone helping the other,
and cheering his comrade on,
the workman encouraging the goldsmith,
the carpenter the blacksmith,
the solderer plating his work,
and fastening it tight with nails!

While he who carves an idol out of wood,
chooses a tree that will not rot,

then gets a clever carpenter
to set him up an idol that will stand!

Can you not understand, cannot you see?
Were you not told this from the first,
have you not grasped this, since the world began?—
that He sits over the round earth, so high
that its inhabitants look like grasshoppers;
he spreads the skies out like a curtain,
and stretches them like a tent;
he brings nobles down to nothing,
he ruins rulers of the world—
scarcely planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely rooted in the earth,
when at a puff from him they wither,
the storm sweeps them off like straws.

"To whom will you compare me, then,
and equal me?" asks the Majestic One.

Lift high your eyes, look up;
who made these stars?
he who marshals them in order,
summoning each one by name.
For fear of him, so mighty and so strong,
.not one fails to appear.

Isaiah 40:18, 19; 41:6, 7; 40:20-26

Where could I go from thy Spirit,
where could I flee from thy face?
I climb to heaven?—but thou art there;
I nestle in the netherworld?—and there thou art!
If I darted swift to the dawn,
to the verge of ocean afar,
thy hand even there would fall on me,
thy right hand would reach me.
If I say, "The dark will screen me,
night will hide me in its curtains,"

yet darkness is not dark to thee,
the night is clear as daylight.

Psalm 139:7-12

A frequent error made in attempting to understand God has been due to the inclination to think of Him as dwelling in a specific place and nowhere else. This not only meant that He could not be found elsewhere but He was available only at that particular spot. For hundreds of years the Hebrews believed that God resided in the Temple at Jerusalem; therefore, in order to worship Him and secure His help, one had to go to that special building. The Hebrews also believed for a long period that God was interested only in their chosen nation, and that He was not particularly concerned about the fate of other races. Other nations were supposed to have their own gods.

Then came the conquest of the kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians, the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the scattering of the Hebrews in exile. Did this mean that their God had been defeated and annihilated when the Temple was gone? That was the question many asked, and some were tempted to turn to the worship of Egyptian or Babylonian deities. But again the prophets spoke in no uncertain terms and with even profounder vision and grasp of the nature of the Eternal. In the following selection Jeremiah advises the people to carry on with confidence and faith that God is still the Eternal and still concerned about their welfare. He assures them that they can reach God with their prayers even in Babylonia, since He accompanies them wherever they go.

"This is the message of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have deported from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their produce, marry wives and bring up families, get

wives for your sons and husbands for your daughters, and multiply where you are—never let your numbers diminish. Do your best for the welfare of the country where I have sent you to be exiles; pray to the Eternal for it, since your welfare lies in its welfare.'

"This is the message of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Never let yourselves be deceived by the prophets and the seers among you, never listen to their dreams; for they are prophesying falsely to you in my name—I never sent them,' says the Eternal.

"This is what the Eternal says: 'As soon as Babylon's seventy years are over, I will visit you and carry out my promise to you, by bringing you back here. For I keep in mind my purpose for you, a purpose of weal, not of woe, to let you have hope for the future; pray to me, and I will answer you; seek me, and you shall find me; when you seek me with all your heart, I will reveal myself to you,' says the Eternal . . ."

Jeremiah 29:4-14

During the period of the Exile another great prophet proclaimed that the Eternal is God of all nations, the one Universal Spirit of the universe. His words have been recorded in the latter part of the Book of Isaiah and he is known as the Second Isaiah or the Isaiah of the Exile. He it was who caught the vision of need to interpret the justice and love of God to all the people of the earth. He believed that God desired to be known and understood by all men, and that He had chosen the leaders of Israel to "carry true religion to the nations." History has proved the rightness of his insight, for it is to the prophets and to Jesus that the entire world turns for the highest and noblest religious truth.

Here is my servant whom I uphold,
my chosen one, my heart's delight;

I have endowed him with my spirit,
to carry true religion to the nations.
He shall not be loud and noisy,
he shall not shout in public;
he shall not crush a broken reed,
nor quench a wick that dimly burns;
loyally shall he set forth true religion,
he shall not be broken nor grow dim,
till he has settled true religion upon earth,
till far lands long for his instruction.

Isaiah 42:1-4

About six hundred years after the time of the Second Isaiah and more than fifty years after Jesus was born, a man named Paul, who was both a Roman citizen and a Jew, visited Athens, and standing on the little hill west of the Acropolis he made a speech to the Greeks. This address echoed the truth which Jeremiah and the Second Isaiah had proclaimed centuries before.

While Paul was waiting . . . at Athens, his soul was irritated at the sight of the idols that filled the city. He argued in the synagogue with the Jews . . . and also in the market-place daily with those who chanced to be present.

Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also came across him. Some of them said, "Whatever does the fellow mean with his scraps of learning?" Others said, "He looks like a herald of foreign deities" . . . Then taking him to the Areopagus they asked, "May we know what is this novel teaching of yours? You talk of some things that sound strange to us; so we want to know what they mean." (For all the Athenians and the foreign visitors to Athens occupied themselves with nothing else than repeating or listening to the latest novelty). So Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe at every turn that

you are a most religious people! Why, as I passed along and scanned your objects of worship, I actually came upon an altar with the inscription,

TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.

Well, I proclaim to you what you worship in your ignorance, The God who made the world and all things in it, he, as the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in shrines that are made by human hands; he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, for it is he who gives life and breath and all things to all men. All nations he has created from a common origin, to dwell all over the earth, fixing their allotted periods and the boundaries of their abodes, meaning them to seek for God on the chance of finding him as they grope for him. Though indeed he is close to each one of us, for it is in him that we live and move and exist—as some of your own poets have said, ‘We too belong to His race.’ Well, as the race of God, we ought not to imagine that the divine nature resembles gold or silver or stone, the product of human art or invention.”

Acts 17:16-30

This same Paul later, when suffering from illness and persecution, wrote to friends in the city of Corinth:

“Hence I never lose heart; though my outward man decays, my inner man is renewed day after day. The slight trouble of the passing hour results in a solid glory past all comparison, for those of us whose eyes are on the unseen, not on the seen; for the seen is transient, the unseen eternal.”

II Corinthians 4:16-18

Finally, the Gospel of John reports two important conversations in which Jesus explained that God is Spirit and that He desires as worshippers those who are concerned, not about

physical needs or desires, but about spiritual values: love of truth, beauty and goodness, kindness and mercy, justice and concern for the welfare of others. These are the qualities of God Himself. Yet they are also characteristics of human personality at its best. To want them, Jesus told the woman of Samaria, is to ask for "living water" which will satisfy the godlike spirit within every human being. To have attained these values, he told Nicodemus the Pharisee, is to be inspired by God, "born from above," and accordingly a true citizen of the kingdom of God.

The Gospel of John was written about 100 A.D., nearly seventy years after the death of Jesus. It represents, therefore, not so much an actual reporting of his exact words as an interpretation of the career and teachings of Jesus with special emphasis on the spiritual truth of his message. We see Jesus stopping to rest at Jacob's well and talking with a Samaritan woman who comes to draw water.

Jesus, exhausted by the journey, sat down at the spring just as he was. It was about noon, and a Samaritan woman came to draw water.

Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink" . . . The Samaritan woman said, "What? You are a Jew, and you ask me for a drink—me, a Samaritan!" (Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered, "If you knew what is the free gift of God and who is asking you for a drink, you would have asked him instead, and he would have given you 'living' water." "Sir," said the woman, "you have nothing to draw water with, and it is a deep well; where do you get your 'living' water? Are you a greater man than Jacob, our ancestor? He gave us this well, and he drank from it, with his sons and his cattle."

Jesus answered, "Anyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but anyone who drinks the water I shall give him will

never thirst any more; the water that I shall give him will turn into a spring of water welling up to life eternal." "Ah, sir," said the woman, "give me this water, so that I need not thirst or come all this road to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go and call your husband, then come back here." The woman replied, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You were right in saying, 'I have no husband'; you have had five husbands, and he whom you have now espoused is not your husband. That was a true word."

"Sir," said the woman, "I see you are a prophet. Now our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, whereas you Jews declare the proper place for worship is at Jerusalem."

"Woman," said Jesus, "believe me, the time is coming when you will be worshipping the Father neither on this mountain nor at Jerusalem. . . . But the time is coming, it has come already, when the real worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and in reality; for these are the worshippers that the Father desires. God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship him in Spirit and in reality."

John 4:6-21, 23, 24

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who belonged to the Jewish authorities; he came one night to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know you have come from God to teach us, for no one could perform these Signs of yours unless God were with him."

Jesus replied, "Truly, truly I tell you, no one can see God's Realm unless he is born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? . . ."

Jesus replied, "Truly, truly I tell you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter God's Realm. What is born of the flesh is flesh: what is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Do not wonder at me telling you, 'You must all be born from above.' The wind blows where it wills; you can hear its sound, but you never know where it has come from or where it goes; it is the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered, "How can that be?"

Jesus replied, "You do not understand this?—you, a teacher in Israel! Truly, truly I tell you, we are speaking of what we do understand, we testify to what we have actually seen—and yet you refuse our testimony. If you will not believe, when I speak to you about things on earth, how will you believe if I speak to you about things in heaven? . . . He who comes from above is far above all others; he who springs from earth belongs to earth and speaks of earth; he who comes from heaven is far above all others. He is testifying to what he has seen and heard, and yet no one accepts his testimony. Whoever does accept it, certifies to the truth of God."

John 3:1-12, 31-33

Again in a letter written to groups of early Christians in the Greek city of Ephesus, the same writer explained still more clearly the great truth which had been learned from Jesus: that God is the Spirit of Love and Truth. As we express love and good will toward others, we are proving the existence of the Eternal Power whom we call God.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love belongs to God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God; he who does not love, does not know God, for God is love. . . . God no one has ever seen; but if we love one another, then God remains within us, and love for him is complete in us. This is how we may be sure we remain in him and he in us, because he has given us a share in his own Spirit.

I John 4:7, 12, 13



CHAPTER 8

God as Purpose

SCIENTISTS tell us that our sun is gradually cooling and that the earth will eventually freeze and become lifeless. What then is to be the final end of all the generations of mankind? Can we discover any purpose in the creation of our universe with its myriad forms of life and its intricate structure of law-abiding energy? Is it possible that, as the cynical writer of Ecclesiastes put it, life "is a vain, futile business. . . . Whatever is, it has already been; whatever is to be, already is; and God is ever bringing back what disappears"?

As one looks about, there appears plenty of useless, meaningless activity, so much of life spent repeating humdrum tasks, day after day. One generation follows another, making the same mistakes, meeting the same disappointments, reaping the same harvest of success and failure, and finally dying of similar diseases. If one surveys the longer span of history, he sees the rise and then the fall of one empire after another, a fatal record of recurring wars, each one more terrible than the one before. Is there then any evidence of purpose or plan in all that happens in our universe?

If we had asked the Greek or Roman philosophers, they would have replied that they could detect only "cycles of existence, ever returning upon themselves, events moving in circles to work out old problems as it has worked them out before for the billionth time; no progress, no issue, no developing plot in the human drama that comes to its denouement."

ment; just endless circumference around which life moves like a man lost in the woods who, vainly imagining himself to be coming out somewhere, finds himself at last back where he started."* Instead of hope for the future of mankind, they urged the patient acceptance of whatever fate the gods decreed. This, they contended, was the noblest attitude a man could develop.

Or if we ask the Hindu philosophers even today, they will tell us that the final end of life is Nirvana, a state of complete unconsciousness, a deep sleep which brings forgetfulness at last of man's troubled existence.

There is, however, another answer which becomes more and more insistent in the pages of the Bible. The leaders of the people were guided by a Divine Will which expected them to carry out definite plans. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land according to plan. David led victorious armies and established his kingdom according to plan. Solomon built the Temple according to plan. The prophets predicted coming events as the fulfillment of God's judgments against the nations of the earth, according to plan.

As the story progresses, there is an ever-widening vision of the scope of God's purposes. In very early days His scheme seemed to embrace only a single family, then a particular tribe, then a nation, then other nations, until finally a full-scale world-wide plan was disclosed, stretching back to creation and extending into eternity.

This ancient biblical faith in an evolving purpose for mankind has been underscored by such a modern historian as Arnold J. Toynbee. He has traced with magnificent scholarship this same continuity of history.

In the selections that follow, there is exhibited the stern insistence of the great prophets that God is concerned above all about justice and mercy, about the freeing of human

* Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Manhood of the Master* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1943), p. 56.

beings from all that injures the body, enslaves the mind, or dulls the spirit. God chooses for active service those who understand true religion, who are devoted to His purposes, thus becoming the human instruments of His will. Such men and nations, we are told, are promised unfailing assistance.

Here is the message of the Eternal, the true God,
 who spread and stretched the heavens,
 who made the earth and all it bears,
 who gives breath to its people
 and life to those who walk on it;
 "I the Eternal have called you of set purpose,
 I have taken you by the hand,
 I have formed you for the rescuing of my people,
 for a light to nations,
 to open eyes that are blind
 to free captives from their bondage,
 darkened lives from prison."

And the Eternal who had formed me, from my birth
 to serve him in restoring Jacob,
 in gathering Israel back to him,
 the Eternal now says, " 'Tis too slight a service
 to set the clans of Jacob up again,
 and restore Israel's survivors;
 I now appoint you to bring light to the nations,
 that my salvation may reach the world's end."

Isaiah 42:5-7; 49:5, 6

"Listen, all ye who care for the good cause,
 O people who lay my laws to heart!
 Fear not the taunts of men;
 when they revile you, never be dismayed;
 for they shall be moth-eaten like a robe,
 like wool consumed by worms,

but my deliverance endures for ever,
my triumph knows no end."

"Seek the Eternal while he may be found,
call to him while he is near;

"For my plans are not like your plans,
nor your ways like my ways—
so the Eternal One declares;
nay, as heaven is higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my plans than your plans.

As rain and snow from heaven fall not in vain,
but water earth until it yields
seed for the sower, food for hungry men,
so with the promise that has passed my lips:
it falls not fruitless and in vain,
but works out what I will,
and carries out my purpose."

Isaiah 51:7, 8; 55:6, 8-11

Magnificent as these selections are, written by the Second Isaiah about 540 B.C. when Israel's long exile in Babylon finally came to an end, another passage, written nearly two centuries earlier, glows even more brightly, proclaiming that it is God's purpose to establish justice and peace on the earth. These lines appear both in the Book of Micah and among the writings of the first Isaiah.

In after days it shall be
that the Eternal's hill shall rise,
towering over every hill,
and higher than the heights.

To it shall all the nations stream,
and many a folk exclaim,

"Come, let us go to the Eternal's hill,
to the house of Jacob's God,

that he may instruct us in his ways,
to walk upon his paths." . . .

He will decide the disputes of the nations,
and settle many a people's case,
till swords are beaten into ploughshares,
spears into pruning-hooks;
no nation draws the sword against another,
no longer shall men learn to fight.

Isaiah 2:2-4

At this point someone may say that, even though the prophets could stand on their mountaintops and foresee the fate of nations according to divine Plan, it is impossible to imagine God having purpose for the individual life. Such a notion may seem fantastic.

Yet it is obvious that it would be impossible to carry out an over-all plan for nations or for mankind as a whole unless the individual members who form the nation or the human race cooperate. That would be like calling signals for a football team in which each player had his own strategy and refused his part in the play indicated by the quarterback. The result would be hopeless confusion instead of united teamwork.

It seems clear that, where progress has been made, God has worked through individuals, using them to give to the world new beauty, new truth, new invention, new ideals. When we turn to art, we think not of nations but of Phidias, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt. Poetry does not mean the Greeks or British but Homer and Shakespeare. Think of invention and the names of Watt, Marconi, Fulton and Bell come to mind. It is impossible to think of achievement of purpose in any field without thinking of human beings who have reached some goal. Nor is it possible to think of personality at its best without remembering the high

purpose that motivated it. We cannot conceive of Beethoven apart from music, or of Livingstone apart from the exploration of Africa, or of Lister apart from the conquest of infection, or of Einstein apart from the search for scientific truth.

The surest test of personality, therefore, is this sense of purpose and the intensity of one's devotion to it. To be sure, we are not born with labels on us to indicate our future places in the scheme of things. Instead we are given freedom of choice along with talents or abilities of various sorts, each person being required to discover what he can do best. Moreover, regardless of our talents or lack of them, regardless of our particular job or its size, we can attain in any sphere the ideals of noble character: gentleness, kindness, honesty, sincerity, unselfishness, courage, love.

Full faith that God has a design for each individual life was expressed in Psalm 139 by some unknown poet several hundred years before Jesus:

All the days of my life were foreseen by thee,
set down within thy book;
ere ever they took shape, they were assigned me,
ere ever one of them was mine.

O God, what mysteries I find in thee!
How vast the number of thy purposes!
I try to count them?—they are more than the sand;
I wake from my reverie, and I am still lost in thee.

Psalm 139:16-18

For the completest expression of purpose which the world has yet seen, we must look to that personality who has had the greatest influence on the course of human history: a young man named Jesus. Luke reports that he announced the aim of his life by reading a selection from the Second Isaiah:

Coming to Nazaret, where he had been brought up, on the sabbath he entered the synagogue as was his custom. He stood up to read the lesson, and was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah; on opening the book he came upon the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me:
for he has consecrated me to preach the gospel to the poor,
he has sent me to proclaim release for captives
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set free the oppressed,
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.

Then, folding up the book, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him, and he proceeded to tell them that "today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 4:16-21

Jesus talked about "the will of God" with supreme confidence that God is working out His high purpose for mankind and expects men and women to assist in fulfilling His great campaign for love, justice, righteousness, mercy and truth.

"It is not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord!' who will get into the Realm of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven."

Matthew 7:21

"Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, that is my brother and sister and mother."

Matthew 12:50

"... my aim is not my will but the will of him who sent me."

John 5:30

When his disciples asked him how to pray, he started with the thrilling sentence:

“Our Father in heaven,
thy name be revered,
thy reign begin,
thy will be done
on earth as in heaven!”

Matthew 6:9, 10

Always in the mind of Jesus the will of God was centered on people: His love for them, His wise provision for them, His infinite desire for their well-being and happiness. Jesus described God's purpose in many ways: in terms of tender care for little children, of stern insistence upon justice and mercy, of a shepherd's anxious search for a lost sheep, of neighborly kindness to someone in desperate need. In his dramatic description of Judgment Day, human beings are to be judged, not by what they have gained for themselves in wealth and distinction, but by the services they have rendered to others.

“When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory, and all nations will be gathered in front of him; he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, setting the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left.

“Then shall the King say to those on his right, ‘Come, you whom my Father has blessed, come into your inheritance in the realm prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was hungry and you fed me,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was a stranger and you entertained me,
I was unclothed and you clothed me,

I was ill and you looked after me,
I was in prison and you visited me.'

"Then the just will answer,
Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you:
or thirsty and gave you drink?
when did we see you a stranger and entertain you?
or unclothed and clothed you?
when did we see you ill or in prison and visit you?"

"The King will answer them, 'I tell you truly, in so far as you did it to one of these my brothers, even to the least of them, you did it to me.'"

Matthew 25:31-40

Thus for Jesus the purpose of God is not to be found in the creation of planets or of a galaxy of stars, not in the building of great cities or empires, nor in the organization of vast institutions, but rather in the steady growth of human character, in the development of those inner spiritual qualities which are expressed in fair dealing, unselfish love, devotion to truth, kindness, mercy and good will. So convinced was Jesus that the end and aim of all creation is the glory of fine character that he became the greatest champion of human personality mankind has yet seen: an amazing combination of tender concern for the weak, the sick, the outcast, the suffering, and of stern indignation against anyone or anything that harms personality or prevents the growth of character, thus interfering with the purpose of God.

To his disciples he said, "It is inevitable that hindrances should come, but woe to the man by whom they come; it would be well for him to have a millstone hung round his neck and be tossed into the sea, rather than prove a hindrance to one of these little ones!"

Luke 17:1, 2

When his enemies closed in to silence him, Jesus was ready to die rather than to fail in carrying out God's task.

"Father, if it please thee, take this cup away from me. But thy will, not mine, be done."

Luke 22:42

To a world dominated by the ominous march of Roman legions, when hate and fear seemed far stronger than kindness and mercy, this new understanding of God must have sounded strange and unreal. The idea of a kingdom of love on earth with human personality as its greatest treasure and understanding as its guiding policy must have seemed a far-away vision to many of his listeners. Small wonder that the Pharisees sneered and called Jesus mad.

Yet even when he faced defeat, when lesser men would have considered their cause desperate, Jesus was still convinced of victory. There was never a doubt in his mind that the kingdom of God would eventually be established on the earth. He spoke confidently about the sure growth of the tiny mustard seed, with surprising insight into a power which science has since proved: the quiet but irresistible process of living growth.

At this point someone may ask, if such is the purpose of God, why did He not establish His kingdom on earth to begin with, instead of requiring humanity to struggle for centuries, slowly acquiring the wisdom necessary to achieve a peaceful, cooperative world? Admittedly, we cannot comprehend fully the designs of God, any more than a foot soldier can appreciate the entire strategy of his general. As Paul wrote to a group of Christians in Rome about 56 A.D.,

"What a fathomless wealth lies in the wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable his judgments! How mysterious his methods!"

Who ever understood the thoughts of the Lord?

Who has ever been his counsellor?

Who has first given to him and has to be repaid? All comes from him, all lives by him, all ends in him. . . ."

Romans 11:33-36

Yet one point is clear: if God had placed us in an ideal world without the necessity for effort or struggle, there would be no development of character. Like puppets on a string, men would be automatons. By giving us freedom of choice God has shared with us His power, and has endowed us with a portion of His imagination and creative energy. He challenges us to become partners with Him in creation and thereby develop resources of character.

Today in a world of conflict, threatened by destruction from hydrogen bombs, the kingdom of God seems as far away as ever. Yet never before has mankind had at its command so many tools for the establishment of such a kingdom. These tools have been developed slowly, almost imperceptibly, as men of each generation have added bit by bit to the sum total of human knowledge and skill. Suppose Jesus had been born into the atomic age, with "magic bullets" to conquer disease and relieve human suffering, with new agricultural methods to provide abundant food supplies and feed the hungry, with machines and technological crafts to raise living standards and banish poverty from the earth, and with astonishing means of communication and transportation to bind all the peoples of the world together. To these must be added the increasing store of knowledge about the nature of man himself that has issued from the studies of historians, anthropologists, sociologists, physiologists, and psychologists. Jesus would surely ask why these products of human genius are not being fully used to free human personality from its ancient enemies of fear, ignorance, poverty and disease, and to promote good will and peace on the earth. He would rightfully accuse us of not carrying forward the high Purpose of the Living God. As the true representative of that Purpose,

Jesus would undoubtedly say to us as he said to the multitudes in Palestine:

"It is not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord!' who will get into the Realm of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven."

Matthew 7:21



CHAPTER 9

God as Father

WHENEVER we read of someone who has inherited great wealth, we are likely to exclaim how wonderful it would be if something like that would only happen to us. Most of us have played the imaginary game, "What would you do if you had a million dollars?"

Suppose, however, you suddenly realized you were the true heir to an inheritance far richer than has ever been bequeathed by any millionaire or king or potentate, and that with such resources you have wide choice as to the goals you wish to achieve. This is no fantastic daydream or idle speculation. Every human being is actually the heir to a fortune of far greater worth and importance than money.

To know more about this inheritance, we must start with the fact that we were created by God, and were endowed by Him with mind and spirit in the image of His own. Just as a child inherits physical characteristics from his parents, so from God man receives creative ability and inventive genius, the desire for truth and justice, the capacity for love and mercy, the urgent need for a sense of purpose—all of them spiritual qualities in the nature of God. What is best and noblest in man is evidence of God in man, indisputable proof of our spiritual kinship to the Divine Creator.

This all-important fact that all human beings are closely related to the great Mind who created the universe is the astonishing truth which Jesus announced to the world two thousand years ago. To make this fact more vivid he described God as the heavenly Father of mankind, with all the love,

gentleness and concern of a human father for his children. Here then is the grand climax of our understanding of God. In this exciting answer Jesus gave to the questions men asked about God we have not only the noblest concept of God but the most inspiring concept of man as well.

Someone may ask why there is not more evidence of man's royal heritage, why it is that many people make so little use of their resources. One major reason has been the mistaken notion that human nature is basically evil rather than good. Another reason lies in unfortunate patterns of early training which have filled children's minds with crippling fear and distrust instead of releasing their natural capacities for courage, self-confidence and love.

Still another reason for man's failure to live up to his possibilities may be found in a false standard of values, often handed down from one generation to the next, resulting in lack of vision and unwillingness to accept the responsibilities that go with high privilege. Like a prince who has renounced his throne in order to follow some private whim, many men prefer to live on a lower level than to accept the higher mission that goes with the honor of being a true son of God. Regardless of these or any other reason for man's failure to measure up to the best that is within him, the most important truth yet discovered is still the realization of Jesus that God is the spiritual Father of human personality.

The prophets of the Old Testament talked about God as Father, not of individuals, however, but of a chosen people or nation. The prophet Nathan assured the young King David that God would give him a family and thus establish his kingdom for generations to come:

"... the Eternal will build up a house, a family for you. 'When all your days are done and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise your offspring, born of your body, and establish their dynasty.'

To them will I be a father,
to me they shall be sons . . . ?”

II Samuel 7:12, 14

The unknown prophet of the seventh century B.C., who edited and rewrote the ancient Hebrew laws on a new moral and spiritual plane, put into the mouth of Moses these inspiring words:

“You are sons to the Eternal your God . . . for you are a people sacred to the Eternal your God, and the Eternal has chosen you to be his prized possession, out of all nations on the face of the earth.”

Deuteronomy 14:1, 2

Both Hosea and Jeremiah described God as the Father of their people.

I loved Israel when he was young,
ever since Egypt I called him my son.
But the more I called to them,
the further they went from me,
sacrificing to Baals
and offering incense to idols.
Yet I taught Ephraim to walk,
holding them in my arms;
with human cords I led them,
I drove them with a harness of love,
but heeding not my care for them
they broke away from me . . .

Hosea 11:1-4

I thought that I would treat you like a son,
and give you a delightful land,
the fairest heritage of any nation.
I thought that you would call me Father,
and never turn away from me.

Hark, I hear them on the bare heights,
 Israel beseeching and bewailing;
for they have wilfully gone astray,
 ignoring the Eternal One, their God.
Turn back, you turncoat children,
 and I will heal your hurt.

Jeremiah 3:19, 21, 22

Then after the return of the exiled people from Babylon, a later prophet wrote:

Ah now, thou art our Father, O Eternal,
 thine own hands have made us;
we are but clay,
 thou art the potter.

Isaiah 64:8

Psalm 103 gives a dramatic description of God as the ideal Father. Jesus knew the Psalms so well and quoted from them so often that one cannot help suspecting that this was one of his favorites.

Bless the Eternal, O my soul,
 let all my being bless his sacred name;
bless the Eternal, O my soul,
 remember all his benefits;
he pardons all your sins,
 and all your sicknesses he heals,
he saves your life from death,
 he crowns you with his love and pity,
he gives you all your heart's desire,
 renewing your youth like an eagle's. . . .

The Eternal is pitiful and gracious,
 slow to be angry, rich in love;
he will not always chafe,
 he will not hold to his anger for all time;

he treats us not according to our sins,
he deals not with us as our guilt deserves;
but, high as heaven is over earth,
so vast his love is to his worshippers;
as far as the east from the west,
so far he puts our sins away from us.
As a father pities his children,
so the Eternal pities his worshippers;
he knows what we are made of,
he remembers we are dust.

Psalm 103:1-5, 8-14

In the words of Jesus, however, we find still more vital meaning in this relationship between God and man. He went beyond the idea of special concern for a single nation to the full realization of God as the universal Father, regardless of race, color or creed. In sharp contrast with the notion that people are as dust or as grass that is mowed down and left to blow away, Jesus proclaimed the sacredness of human personality, to be respected, protected, developed, encouraged, preserved, as the most precious substance in the universe. God loves men and women and little children, he said, not as outsiders but as members of His own family, endowed with abilities, talents, characteristics similar to His own, and therefore gifted with the possibility of becoming His own sons.

And how are we to become true sons of God? To Jesus the answer was very clear: by being like our Father in our relationships with other people; by learning His love, His mercy, His willingness to forgive, His purposes for humanity. Here are the words of the one man in all history who knew God best and became truly His most perfect Son. His interest was not in theology or law or philosophy or vague speculation but in people—their troubles, their needs, their high possibilities.

"As you would like men to do to you,
so do to them.

If you love only those who love you, what credit is that
to you?

Why, even sinful men love those who love them.

If you help only those who help you, what merit is that
to you?

Why, even sinful men do that.

If you only lend to those from whom you hope to get
something, what credit is that to you?

Even sinful men lend to one another, so as to get a fair
return.

No, you must love your enemies and help them,
you must lend to them without expecting any return;

then you will have a rich reward,
you will be sons of the Most High—

for he is kind even to the ungrateful and the evil.

Be merciful,
as your Father is merciful."

Luke 6:31-36

"What father among you, if asked by his son for a loaf,
will hand him a stone?—

or, if asked for a fish, will hand him a serpent instead
of a fish?—

or, if asked for an egg, will he hand him a scorpion?

Well, if for all your evil you know how to give your chil-
dren what is good,

how much more will your Father give the holy Spirit
from heaven to those who ask him?"

Luke 11:11-13

"Do not pray by idle rote like pagans,
for they suppose they will be heard the more they say;
you must not copy them;
your Father knows your needs before you ask him.

Let this be how you pray:

'our Father in heaven,
thy name be revered,
thy Reign begin,
thy will be done
on earth as in heaven!
give us to-day our bread for the morrow,
and forgive us our debts
as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors,
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.'

For if you forgive men their trespasses,
then your heavenly Father will forgive you;
but if you do not forgive men,
your Father will not forgive your trespasses either."

Matthew 6:7-15

Jesus continually emphasized the wisdom and patience which God displays in His dealings. Just as a wise human father does not rule his children with an iron hand and insist on making their decisions, so God does not coerce, but permits freedom of choice as to whether or not we will accept our full inheritance. No matter how foolish people may be or how many their mistakes, God is not only waiting to forgive but stands ready to restore them to full sonship.

Modern psychologists underscore the truth of this insight: that no matter how early training or experience has dulled mental capacity or creative ability, native endowment remains intact, waiting to be developed. We may neglect our inheritance but it is never utterly withdrawn. The famous story of the Prodigal Son gives thrilling assurance that a person can always forget the past and return to a glorious present.

"There was a man who had two sons, and the younger said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that

falls to me.' So he divided his means among them. Not many days later, the younger son sold off everything and went abroad to a distant land, where he squandered his means in loose living. After he had spent his all, a severe famine set in throughout that land, and he began to feel in want; so he went and attached himself to a citizen of that land, who sent him to his fields to feed swine. And he was fain to fill his belly with the pods the swine were eating; no one gave him anything.

"But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many hired men of my father have more than enough to eat, and here am I, perishing of hunger! I will be up and off to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I don't deserve to be called your son any more; only make me like one of your hired men."'

"So he got up and went off to his father. But when he was still far away, his father saw him and felt pity for him and ran to fall upon his neck and kiss him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I don't deserve to be called your son any more.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him, give him a ring for his hand and sandals for his feet, and bring the fatted calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for my son here was dead and he has come to life, he was lost and he is found. . . .'

Luke 15:11-24

Of all the thousands of people who saw Jesus and heard him speak, only a small handful took seriously his message that God is actually the spiritual Father of human personality and that every person has within him the possibility of character and a high destiny. Even these few had difficulty in understanding all that he told them during the brief period

he was with them. The Gospel of John tells us that the last time he talked with his disciples, one of them asked to "see the Father," and that Jesus once again tried to explain the close spiritual relationship between God and man. To him it was so obvious that he could scarcely understand why his disciples did not realize it.

In the following selection, the writer was reporting the conversation many years later, no doubt adding his own interpretation to the words of Jesus.

"Lord," said Philip, "let us see the Father; that is all we want." Jesus said to him, "Philip, have I been with you all this time, and yet you do not understand me? He who has seen me has seen the Father. What do you mean by saying, 'Let us see the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you all I do not speak of my own accord; it is the Father who remains ever in me, who is performing his own deeds. Believe me, I am in the Father and the Father is in me: —or else, believe because of the deeds themselves. Truly, truly I tell you, he who believes in me will do the very deeds I do, and still greater deeds than these."

John 14:8-12

The understanding which Jesus had of God as Father was no idle dream or theoretical subject for debate. It was the most thrilling fact in all the world, vitally affecting all of his thinking, everything he said, and everything he did. As a true Son of God, he did what he knew his Father expected him to do: he insisted upon justice, mercy, truth, love, the sacredness of human personality, and the reign of God on earth. And he urged others to share this high mission.

To understand God, Jesus implied, think of Him as an ideal Father, who tells His children about the nature of the world about them; who wants to guide them as they grow up,

yet gives them freedom of choice and opportunity to develop character even though such freedom may mean failure and disappointment; who loves them all in spite of their mistakes; who desires all His children to love and forgive one another as He is willing to forgive them; who stands ready to endow them with abilities and powers far beyond their dearest dreams, if only they will use their gifts to carry out His purposes. Here, in such understanding of God, lay the secret of the enduring power of the life of Jesus.

It seems strange that even today, after two thousand years, the majority of the people do not yet grasp the full meaning of being children of God. Whenever men and women have taken Jesus seriously, they have found life tremendously adventurous, exciting, joyous, with inexhaustible resources at their command, and their influence has had no bounds.

One such man who changed the course of history was Paul of Tarsus. This paragraph is from a letter which he wrote about 57 A.D. to a little group of Christians at Rome.

"For the sons of God are those who are guided by the Spirit of God. You have received no slavish spirit that would make you relapse into fear; you have received the Spirit of sonship. And when we cry, "Abba! Father!", it is this Spirit testifying along with our own spirit that we are children of God; and if children, heirs as well, heirs of God, heirs along with Christ. . . ."

Romans 8:14-17

One cannot help wondering what might happen during the next generation if fifty young men and women who are eager for high adventure would take seriously the solemn truth that they are "gifted alike with the privilege of sonship to God and the responsibility of an eternal destiny."*

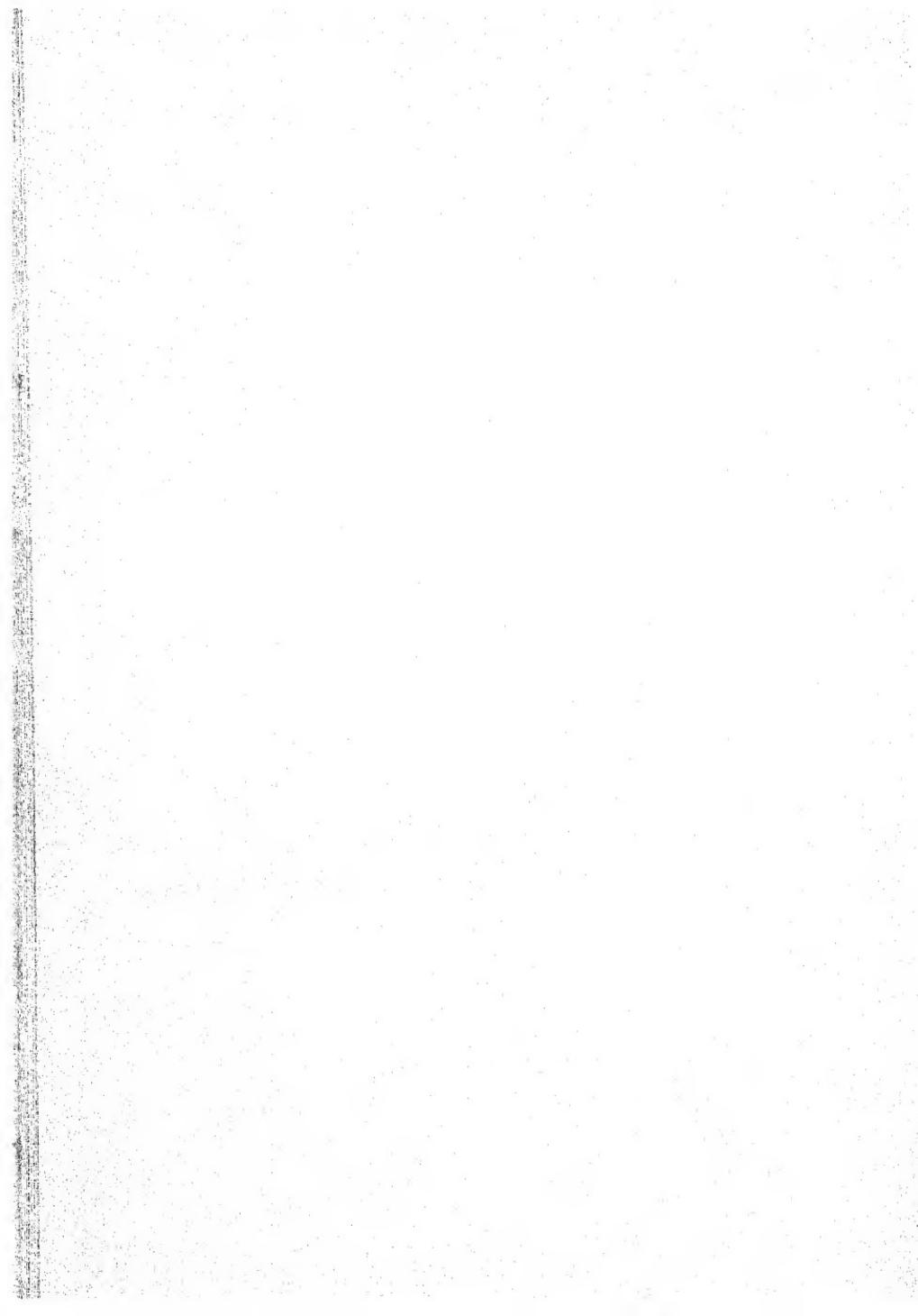
* Harry Emerson Fosdick, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Harper & Brothers, 1938), p. 94.



SECTION TWO

The Meaning of Right and Wrong AS PROCLAIMED BY OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

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CHAPTER 10

Ancient Discoveries of Moral Law

WHEN a scientist begins a new experiment, he tries first of all to understand the physical laws governing the particular elements or substances with which he is dealing. From these laws he knows what to expect under various conditions and what results he should obtain. The engineer who starts to design an airplane must know the principles of aerodynamics. The physicist who would carry on research in atomic energy must learn and follow carefully the laws governing physical matter.

In the great experiment called life, we are expected to learn the moral principles which enable human beings to live together with the greatest happiness and satisfaction: those fundamental principles by which we know the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, wisdom and folly. We live in an orderly, law-abiding universe; man is no exception. Just as knowledge of physical law is necessary to achievement in the field of science, so understanding of the basic rules of right conduct is essential to the growth of personality and to satisfactory human relationships.

At this point someone may say that it is difficult to set up a fixed standard of right and wrong, that ideas of good and evil change from time to time and from place to place, that what is regarded as right in one group is wrong in another. To be sure, social custom and legal codes are continually being revised and modified to meet changing conditions. Cer-

tain laws which seemed wise and good for a particular pattern of life become outworn and unnecessary for another. However, in the course of history it is possible to discern certain basic principles which are true guides for human life and conduct in every age and under every condition; ideas of right and wrong that are as true today as they were three thousand years ago; ideas that are eternally true because they are based on clear understanding of the nature of man and of the universe; ideas that have been proved right whenever they have been tested.

Just as the understanding of God was a long, slow process extending from the dawn of history down to the coming of Jesus, and is not finished yet, so the realization of principles that should govern human conduct began back in the days of wandering nomad tribes, has continued throughout history, and is still going on today. The discovery of moral law has been the result of practical testing by trial and error. It is an accumulation of wisdom gained from long centuries of human experience.

The Ten Commandments, therefore, are not to be accepted merely because they were proclaimed by Moses and the prophets as the Word of God. They are to be obeyed because man's own moral nature and sense of justice demand them. Obedience to them is necessary if human beings are to live together in mutual confidence. There can be no peace or security in any group where irresponsible individuals, without respect for God or man, feel free to lie, to cheat, to steal, to covet, to commit adultery, to kill, or to exploit those weaker than themselves.

In the next six chapters we shall explore the great moral principles of life as they were proclaimed by prophets of the Old Testament: reverence for God, a right spirit within, concern for others, social justice, a true sense of values, faith in the ultimate triumph of right and truth. These principles have never been surpassed in any legal code. They formed the

basis for the teachings of Jesus, who gave them new emphasis and still greater meaning in his religion of love.

To ignore them is to risk consequences as certain as those which follow jumping off a roof in disregard of the law of gravity. The punishment for the breaking of moral law is not always so dramatic; it is often hidden deep within human beings in dissatisfaction, restlessness, fear, sense of failure, unhappiness. On the other hand, to understand and live in accordance with these high principles opens the way to fine character, faith and courage, deep satisfaction, the joy of living, and to the full development of God-given capacities.



CHAPTER 11

Reverence for God

A MAN lost in the woods, uncertain which path leads back to camp, depends upon his compass to regain direction. A sea captain gets his bearings and steers with certainty by keeping his eye on the ship's compass. Just as the magnetic needle points unfailingly to the north, so the mind of man finds his moral bearings and recovers an unerring sense of right and wrong when he takes account of the reality of God.

It is not enough to be vaguely aware of the existence of some kind of supreme being. If God is to become a true source of wisdom and inspiration, we must have adequate knowledge of His nature and character. The prophets of the Old Testament believed that moral law is rooted in the conviction that at the center of the universe is a righteous Power to whom every human being owes allegiance as the Source of Life and Law. Failure to take account of this Divine Will that is always present and forever at work in our world is far more foolish than to ignore the sun at the center of the solar system.

The Ten Commandments begin with insistence on undivided loyalty to the one true God whom the prophets had come to understand as the Champion of Truth and Justice. These laws were written in the days when each tribe or nation had its own god, and readily succumbed to the temptation to worship whichever divinity seemed to promise victory in war or protection from one's enemies. At an earlier period

the Hebrews, like neighboring peoples, had worshipped tree images or the figure of a young bull as a symbol of vital energy. The law of Moses far surpassed such idolatry.

Here are the first four Commandments, as they were finally rewritten by the unknown prophet of the seventh century B.C. as part of the great farewell address by Moses. Like other pronouncements of the prophets, the laws were given to the people as the direct word of God.

“I am the Eternal your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt, the slave-pen.

“You shall have no gods but me.

“You shall not carve for yourselves any idol, the shape of anything in heaven above or on the earth below or in the sea; you shall not bow down to them nor worship them, for I the Eternal your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the sins of their fathers, punishing those who hate me, to the third and the fourth generation, but showing kindness to thousands of those who love me and obey my orders.

“You shall not use the name of the Eternal your God profanely; for the Eternal will never acquit anyone who uses his name profanely.

“Keep the sabbath sacred, as the Eternal your God has ordered you. Six days you may labour and do all your business, but the seventh day is the sabbath in honour of the Eternal your God, and on it you must not do any business, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your slaves, male or female, nor your ox nor your ass nor any of your cattle, nor the alien who is among you. Your slaves, male and female, are to rest as well as yourselves.”

“Listen, Israel: ‘the Eternal, the Eternal alone, is our God. And you must love the Eternal your God with all your mind

and all your soul and all your strength.' These words you must learn by heart, this charge of mine; you must impress them on your children; you must talk about them when you are sitting at home and when you are on the road, when you lie down and when you rise up."

"Beware of saying to yourselves, 'My own power and the strength of my own hand have won me all this wealth.' You must remember the Eternal your God, for it is he who gives you the power of gaining wealth, that he may ratify the compact which he swore to your fathers, as it is to-day. If ever you forget the Eternal your God and follow other gods, worshipping them and doing homage to them, then I testify against you this day that you shall be wiped out, wiped out like the nations which the Eternal is to wipe out before you, since you would not listen to the voice of the Eternal your God."

Deuteronomy 5:6-14; 6:4-7; 8:17-20

We no longer live in a world where there is a diversity of gods, one for Americans, another for the British, still others for the French, Germans, Japanese. That only means that competition is less obvious and therefore more dangerous. As individuals and as nations, we are inclined to formulate ideas of God that suit our own purposes, creating for ourselves a convenient god in our own image, instead of acknowledging the demands of the Eternal.

The Second Commandment prohibits the setting up of images within our own homes or in our churches before which we bow down and worship. This we may not do. Yet automobiles, airplanes, television sets and a variety of gadgets monopolize our time and attention to the exclusion of God or the understanding of His purposes for the world. Atomic energy and hydrogen bombs are often regarded as solutions to many problems, with complete indifference to the Eternal who requires justice, mercy and love.

The Third Commandment has sometimes been interpreted as a law against swearing, the use of God's name to give special emphasis or to express anger. But there is a deeper meaning here. Another modern scholar, John Merlin Powis Smith, translates it, "You must not invoke the name of the Lord your God to evil intent," making it clear that we are not to claim the help of God for purposes which He would not approve. Yet this is common practice: to call upon the Lord to bless an undertaking which is thoroughly selfish or unjust or even destructive. In time of war, every nation claims that God is on its side, as though the God of the universe and the loving Father of mankind would take sides in a bloody conflict bringing death to many of His children and untold suffering to all.

The Fourth Commandment requires a day of rest each week for every human being: for slaves as well as masters, for employers and employees alike. Modern medicine recognizes that there are sound reasons for relaxation one day in seven, since both mind and body function more efficiently with regular periods of rest. It is surprising that this need was recognized so early in history. It is strange that it is so widely ignored in modern times. On the other hand, sabbath observance was not intended as a deadening restriction but rather as opportunity for genuine refreshment of body and spirit.

We have not learned true reverence for the Eternal, the first great moral law, until our thought attains the highest possible concept of Him and our actions are geared to His high standards for human conduct. It has been proved conclusively that people tend to become like the thing or the person they admire most. We all have our heroes or heroines, past or present. The athlete tries to imitate the skill of some football or baseball star, the art student to learn the secrets of a great master. The young writer reveals the influence of the literary classics he has read and admired. The physics or chemistry student dreams of following in the footsteps of

a Newton or a Lister. As in hero-worship, so in the worship of God we learn to stretch our minds to higher levels of thought and aspiration.

To the prophets of the Old Testament reverence for God meant vastly more than vague adoration of a mysterious being or the routine performance of pious ritual. Ezekiel complained that people listened politely to what he told them about God, but with slight effect upon thought and action.

“As for you, O son of man, your people are talking about you in the streets and at the doors of their houses, saying to one another, ‘Come and let us hear what is the word from the Eternal to-day?’

“They come to you as usual, they sit in front of you, they hear your words, but they will not obey them; their lips are full of lies, their minds are set upon their selfish ends, and they heed you as they would a love-song beautifully rendered and well played—they hear your words, but they will not obey them.”

Ezekiel 33:30-32

More than once the First Isaiah sternly denounced insincerity and empty forms of worship. In our day of conflict and confusion, we do well to listen to this courageous prophet who also lived amid war and national peril. In vain he advised his people against reliance on scheming diplomacy and force of arms. For forty years he warned of eventual disaster, and lived to witness the conquest of Israel by Assyria, and finally the attack on the kingdom of Judah. Just as the Hebrews relied on Egyptian cavalry alone, there are those who now shut their eyes to corruption and amoral standards and put their faith in heavy armaments. Yet the message of Isaiah is as true today as it was 2,700 years ago.

“Since this people draw near me with their mouth,”
says the Eternal,

"honouring me with their lips,
 while their hearts are far remote;
 since their religion is a mockery,
 a mere tradition learned by rote;
 I will now deal with them to their amazement,
 bewildering, surprising them,
 till their wise men lose their wits
 and their clever men are fooled."

Woe to the men who hide
 their plans from the Eternal,
 working in the dark and thinking,
 "No one sees or knows!"

Perverse creatures that you are!

Is a potter no more than his clay?
 Dare anything deny its maker?

Dare a pot hold the potter has no mind?

"Now go in and write this down,
 inscribe it on a scroll,
 to serve in after days
 as a witness for all time.

It is a race rebellious,
 a faithless brood,
 children who will not listen
 to any of the Eternal's laws,
 who refuse visions from their seers
 and true words from their prophets. . . ."

The Lord, the Eternal, Israel's Majesty,
 he had declared,
 "Your safety lies in ceasing to make leagues,
 your strength is quiet faith."
 But this you would not have;
 you answered, "No,
 we must have cavalry to make a charge!"
 Your charge shall be a flight.

"We need swift horses!"

Swift shall be your pursuers:
let but five threaten, you shall fly,
 till few are left of you,
lonely like any pole upon the hills,
 like a lone signal on a mountain-top!

Woe to those who make their way
 for help to Egypt,
relying on her horse,
 and on her force of chariots. . . .
and never heeding Israel's Majesty,
 never consulting the Eternal!

Yet the Eternal has his own plans—doom
 and threats that may not be recalled;
he will attack these schemers
 and their evil allies.

Egyptians are but men, not God,
 their cavalry merely mortal;
let the Eternal only strike,
 then shall supporter and supported both
collapse and crumble!

For this is the Eternal's word to me:
As a lion or young lion
 growls over his prey,
when the shepherds are all summoned
 to attack him;
as their shouting never scares him,
 as their din never daunts him,
so shall the Lord of hosts
 hold fast mount Sion.

Like a bird fluttering above its nest,
 shall the Eternal ward Jerusalem,
shielding her and saving her,
 sparing and preserving her.

O men of Israel, come back to him
 whom you have deeply wronged;
 for on that day must men disdain
 the gold and silver idols
 each has made.

Then even the deaf shall hear the word,
 and blind souls see out of their gloom,
 then humble folk shall find
 new joy in the Eternal;
 the poorest shall exult
 in Israel's Majesty.
 For tyrant foes shall vanish,
 and scoffers be no more,
 and all men keen on crime
 shall be wiped out,
 men who gave false evidence,
 deceiving judges on the bench,
 defrauding good men with a quibble.

This therefore is the word of the Eternal . . .
 "Never again shall Jacob be dismayed,
 never again disgraced;
 for once they see all that I do among them,
 they will revere me,
 they will revere the Majesty of Jacob,
 they will hold Israel's God in awe:
 the erring will gain insight,
 and murmurers will accept the truth."

So the Eternal longs to favour you,
 and moves to show you pity . . .
 For he will show you favour when you sigh,
 and answer you, soon as he hears you cry.
 Though scant and scarce may be
 your bread and water from the Lord,

yet he your Teacher never leaves you now;
 you see your Teacher for yourselves,
 and when you swerve to right or left,
 you hear a Voice behind you whispering,
 "This is the way, walk here."

Isaiah 29:13-16; 30:8-10, 15-17; 31:1-7; 29:18-24; 30:18-21

Three centuries later Hebrew sages took up the task of interpreting religious truth after the fall of Jerusalem and the passing of the great prophets. In this so-called "wisdom" literature the emphasis on righteousness as the essential core of religion was expressed in universal terms, a message as clear to the Persian and Greek conquerors as to the captive Hebrews. The quotation from the Book of Job was written about 400 b.c. The other passage is from the Book of Proverbs, a collection of wise sayings brought together during the following century.

"Where is wisdom to be found?
 And knowledge, where does it abound?
 For silver there are mines,
 and places for refining gold;
 iron from the earth is taken,
 copper smelted out of stones."

"But where is wisdom to be found:
 And knowledge, where does it abound?
 No solid gold can purchase wisdom,
 no silver can be paid for her;
 there is no price for her in gold of Ophir,
 in precious beryls or in sapphires;
 gold and glass are no match for her,
 jewels of gold are no exchange for her;
 coral and crystal are not to be mentioned;
 wisdom is more precious than rubies;

the Ethiopian chrysolite is not equal to her,
no weight of gold can be paid down for her.

"God knows where she is,
God only is aware of her abode;
for he saw to the very ends of earth,
he scanned the whole world under heaven,
when he fixed the forces of the wind,
and measured out the waters,
when he made rules for the rain,
and paths for the lightning flash;
he saw wisdom then, and studied her,
worked with her and proved her.
And he declares to man, 'For you
to revere me is your wisdom,
to shun evil—that is knowledge!'"

Job 28:1, 2, 12, 15-19, 23-28

My son, if you take to heart what I say
and set store by my commands,
bending your ear to wisdom
and applying your mind to knowledge;
if you cry to intelligence
and call for knowledge,
seeking her out as silver
and searching for her like treasure;
then you shall see what reverence for the Eternal is,
and find out what the knowledge of God means.

Then you shall understand duty and goodness,
and keep to every honest course,
living the life of honest men
and keeping to the good man's road.
For wisdom will be welcome to your mind,
knowledge will be a joy to you,

good sense will take charge of you,
sound judgment will keep you right.

Proverbs 2:1-5, 9, 20, 10, 11

Reverence for the Eternal trains men to be wise,
and to be humble is the way to honour.

Proverbs 15:33

One of the most famous stories in the Old Testament is the Feast of Belshazzar from the Book of Daniel. Like the Book of Jonah, the stories about Daniel were written for a purpose.

Alexander the Great had defeated Darius the Persian and brought Palestine under Greek control in 333 B.C. After Alexander's death, however, the country became part of Syria, and the Syrian king was so enthusiastic about Greek culture that he tried to force upon his Jewish subjects the acceptance of Greek ideas in place of their own religion. For ten years loyal Hebrews suffered severe persecution until finally their religious freedom was restored.

During this period of persecution the Book of Daniel was written in order to strengthen the courage of the Hebrews and inspire them to remain loyal to their traditions. The hero is a young prophet who, with his friends, despite fierce persecution, stood firm in the face of the fiery furnace and a den of lions. The dramatic story of the Feast with its mysterious handwriting on the wall has become a symbol of solemn warning to all those who substitute idol-worship for true religion, or treat with contempt the demands of a righteous God.

King Belshazzar gave a great banquet to a thousand of his lords. He was drinking his wine in front of the thousand of them, when, carried away by the wine, Belshazzar gave orders for the gold and silver vessels removed from the tem-

ple at Jerusalem by his father Nebuchadnezzar, to be brought in, so that the king and his lords, his consorts and his concubines, might drink out of them. The gold and silver vessels which had been removed from the temple of God's house at Jerusalem were then brought, and the king and his lords, his consorts and his concubines, drank out of them; they drank their wine and praised their gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.

That very hour, the fingers of a man's hand appeared, writing on the plaster of the royal palace, opposite the lampstand. The king saw the palm of the hand as it wrote, and the king's fresh colour paled, his thoughts alarmed him, the muscles of his thighs relaxed, and his knees struck one against another.

Then the king cried aloud for the enchanters, the diviners, and the astrologers to be brought in. The king declared to the sages of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing and tells me the meaning of it, shall be robed in purple and wear a golden chain round his neck and rank as third within the realm."

But not one of all the king's sages could read the writing or explain the meaning of it to the king. At this, king Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his colour paled, and his lords were at their wits' end.

Then at the cries of the king and his lords, the queen-mother came into the banqueting-hall; the queen-mother said, "O king, live for ever! Let not your thoughts alarm you, let not your colour go. Within your realm there is a man in whom is the spirit of the gods divine. In the days of your father, light and learning and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods themselves were found in him, so that king Nebuchadnezzar, your father, himself made him the master of the magicians, enchanters, diviners, and astrologers, since rare

ability, knowledge, learning, the power of interpreting dreams and solving riddles and reversing spells were found in this very Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar. Let Daniel be called, and he will explain the meaning of this."

Then Daniel was brought into the king's presence. The king said to Daniel, "So you are the Daniel belonging to the exiles of Judah whom the king my father brought from Judah? I hear that the spirit of the gods themselves is in you, and that light and learning and rare wisdom are to be found in you. Well now, the sages, the enchanters, have been brought into my presence to read this writing and to let me hear the meaning of it, but they could not explain its meaning. However, I hear that you can explain things and reverse spells. Now, if you can read this writing and let me hear the meaning of it, you shall wear a purple robe and a golden chain round your neck, and you shall rank third within the realm."

Then Daniel made answer to the king: "Keep your gifts for yourself, and give your rewards to someone else! However, I will read the writing to the king and let him hear the meaning of it.

"O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father the realm with its greatness and glory and majesty, and, owing to the greatness he bestowed upon him, all races, nations, and folk of every tongue trembled in fear of him, for he killed whom he pleased and spared whom he pleased; he raised whom he pleased and put down whom he pleased.

"But when his mind became proud, when his spirit became defiant, so that he bore himself haughtily, he was deposed from his royal throne and deprived of his glory; he was driven away from human beings; his mind was made like the mind of an animal, and his dwelling was with the beasts. He ate grass like cattle and his body was drenched

with the dews of heaven, till he learned that the Most High God rules over the realm of men and that he sets over it anyone whom he chooses. Yet you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. You uplifted yourself against the Lord of heaven, by having the vessels of his house brought in before you, and from them you and your lords, your consorts and your concubines, have drunk wine, praising gods of silver and gold, bronze, iron, wood and stone, which can neither see nor hear nor understand. You have not glorified the God who holds in his own power your breath of life and all your destiny.

"Hence the palm of the hand was sent from his presence, and this writing was inscribed. This is the inscription:

Menê, Tekêl, Perêš

"The meaning of it is: Menê (numbered), God has numbered the days of your kingdom and ended it; Tekêl (weighed), you are weighed in the scales and found wanting; Perêš (divided), your kingdom is divided up and assigned to the Medes and the 'Persians.' "

Then, by order of Belshazzar, Daniel was robed in purple, a chain of gold was hung round his neck, and proclamation was made that he was to rank as third within the realm. That very night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed, and Darius the Mede received the kingdom. . . .

Daniel 5:1-31

Lack of reverence for the Eternal does not necessarily mean physical death, as in the story of Belshazzar. It does, however, mean something far more tragic: the dulling of moral judgment, the weakening of faith in oneself and in one's fellow men, the loss of spiritual insight which gives meaning and value to human life.



CHAPTER 12

A Right Spirit Within

DID you ever stand in front of a mirror and wonder about the person looking out at you? Most of us spend a good deal of time looking at ourselves, deciding what clothes we are going to wear and wondering whether other people will like the way we look. How often though do we take time to think about the person behind the face we see in the mirror? How much do you know about your own invisible self, your mind, your attitudes, your emotions, your innermost desires?

One of the wisest men who ever lived spent his life telling people to know themselves. Socrates believed that he had a divine mission: to convince men of their ignorance and urge them to use their capacity to think. He considered reason the most important faculty human beings possess, the power which makes man different from all other creatures. By using his reason, Socrates said, a person can get some understanding of himself and of the world; he can bring order out of chaos; he can see situations clearly instead of being confused; he can organize and plan his life instead of stumbling along in hit-or-miss fashion. Yet this great Greek philosopher was finally condemned to death for offending his fellow Athenians: he showed them that they lived not by reason, but by impulse, whim, emotion, prejudice, guesswork.

Today, after 2,500 years, modern psychology is making it possible for us to understand ourselves more clearly than ever before. More revolutionary than the atom bomb is the grow-

ing knowledge of human nature, of what goes into the making of personality, of why people act the way they do, of how character is formed, what helps it to grow, and what prevents its positive development. The findings of psychology are by no means complete. Yet the evidence accumulated thus far points to the important fact that man is inherently good; that he is born with a nature that responds normally to truth, justice and good will; that the capacity for fine character is planted within every human being.

The psychologists explain, however, that human nature becomes warped or distorted when normal development is blocked. The problem person is not inherently bad, but for one reason or another he is unable to solve his problems the right way. For example, the boy or girl who feels unwanted or inadequate becomes obsessed with fears, is unable to think straight, and is liable to become aggressive and even destructive in the attempt to overcome the feeling of weakness or inadequacy. Or he may retreat to childish attitudes of dependence in an effort to recover a lost sense of security. Fear and hate, therefore, are dangerous disease germs which poison the mind and prevent the healthy growth of personality.

Thus the evidence of modern psychology points urgently to the need for children to grow up in an atmosphere of understanding and love, with full opportunity to develop their inner resources. One of the tragic consequences of dictatorship in a home or in a nation is that it produces excellent puppets or automatons, but not men and women with reason, imagination, vision, ideals, sensitive to the feelings or needs of others, and capable of accepting responsibility.

It is surprising to find in the Old Testament, recognition of man's inner self as something infinitely precious, to be carefully guarded, to be developed, and to be used for right purposes. To be sure, this realization of the worth of human personality is not to be found throughout the Old Testament.

In the older, more primitive sections such as the story of Adam and Eve, man was regarded merely as a physical being of flesh and blood, into which the breath of life had been injected. In some parts of the Old Testament human beings had little importance or value as individuals apart from the group to which they belonged.

Gradually, however, with the increasing appreciation of God as the Source of justice, truth and love, came the deeper realization that He had endowed man with inner, spiritual capacities similar to His own. This new insight into the dignity of human personality was not generally understood, but it can be found in the writings of the prophets and in later Psalms and Proverbs.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this new insight into the nature of man; with it came fresh emphasis on inner motives which was to reach its climax in the teachings of Jesus. With it also came awareness that the mind of man can be inspired by the Spirit of God. This was given positive proof in the supreme character of Jesus.

The first moral principle of the Old Testament was reverence for God. Another is respect for oneself as a human being, created in the likeness of God and therefore capable of thought and reason, of justice and mercy, of loyalties and high purposes.

Jeremiah, who lived six hundred years before Jesus, was one of the first to discern that the high moral character which makes men strong and nations great is not the result of slavish obedience to law or to repetition of form and ceremony. From long observation of human experience, Jeremiah grasped the truth that men must develop inner resources of character, not by learning rules but by being fired from within by desire for truth, by concern for others, by sincere devotion to standards of value, by loyalty to a great cause.

In the following selections, Jeremiah prophesies that Jerusalem will be destroyed because of the wrong thinking and

evil desires of the people. God, he warns, searches the mind and tests the heart. A time will come, he is certain, when the nation will be saved because people will have within themselves the sure knowledge of right and wrong.

“Leopards are leaping
from a far land,
leaping and growling
at the townships of Judah,
lurking out there in the fields,
round her on every side;
for she has defied me,”
says the Lord of hosts.

You have brought it all upon yourself
by the way you lived;
your evil drives it to your heart,
this bitter, mortal stroke.

Wash your heart clean of evil,
to be saved, Jerusalem.

How long are wicked plans
to lodge with you?

Deep is a man’s mind, deeper than all else,
on evil bent;
who can fathom it?

“I the Eternal search the mind,
I test the heart,
rewarding every man as he has lived,
and as his deeds deserve.”

“A day comes, the Eternal promises,
when I make a fresh compact
with all the house of Israel—

...
“I will put my law within them,
writing it on their hearts;

and I will be a God to them,
and they to me a people;
no longer shall they have to teach
their fellows, each instructing each,
how to know the Eternal; for they all
shall know me, both the great and small" . . .

Jeremiah 4:16-18, 14; 17:9, 10; 31:31, 33, 34

The importance of inner knowledge and understanding is stressed also in a selection from the Book of Proverbs written perhaps a century or more after the age of Socrates. The Hebrew sage who wrote this advice probably never heard of the famous Greek philosopher, yet here is similar emphasis on the development of the mind.

It is well to remember also that this section of the Old Testament was written long after the Temple at Jerusalem had been destroyed and the Hebrew people had been ruled by a succession of conquerors. This was a period when men had to rely on their own judgment instead of depending upon religious laws and traditions.

"Keep in mind what I say
do what I bid you, and you shall live,
swerve not from my orders.
Get sense, get knowledge,
at any cost get knowledge—
never leave her, and she will guard you,
love her, and she will take care of you,
prize her, and she will promote you,
and bring you to honour, if you will embrace her,
she will adorn you with charm
and crown you with glory.
Listen, my son, take to heart what I say,
and the years of your life shall be many;

I am giving you wise directions
 and leading you aright;
 when you walk, you will never be hindered,
 when you run, you will not slip."

Proverbs 4:12

One of the most remarkable passages in the Old Testament is the following selection; its repeated warning is to "guard above all" the inner self. Here is sound psychological advice that is being spotlighted and underlined by modern scientists 2,400 years later. With surprising insight, this ancient seer realized that the human mind can be poisoned by being continually filled with negative, pessimistic ideas. Just as the delicate mechanism of a finely adjusted watch can be thrown out of kilter by misuse or faulty handling, ceasing to be a dependable timepiece, so the spirit of a person can become injured or warped until it loses its sensitivity to true values and right purposes.

"My son, attend to what I say,
 bend your ear to my words;
 never lose sight of them,
 but fix them in your mind;
 to those who find them, they are life,
 and health to all their being.

Guard above all things, guard your inner self,
 for so you live and prosper;
 bar out all talk of evil,
 and banish wayward words;
 let your eyes look straight ahead,
 gaze right in front of you;
 keep a clear path before you,
 and ever make your footing firm;
 never turn to right or left,
 draw back from a wrong step."

Proverbs 4:20-27

Also in the Book of Proverbs is further warning against the danger of wasting time with fools or scoundrels. Even silly talk may result in confusion and the inability to think straight. Those who have respect for themselves are, therefore, advised to avoid thoughtless or evil companions as they would the plague, remembering that the mind, even more than the body, must be protected against injury.

Good sense is on the lips of the intelligent,
but folly lies in the talk of senseless men.

Sensible men are reticent,
but a fool's babbling will bring trouble down.

The good man will not vent his hate;
and he is a fool who spreads a slander.

Where words abound, sin is not wanting:
he who controls his tongue is a wise man.

Good men's talk is like rare silver:
a bad man's views are little worth.

The words of good men will make many wise,
but a fool's lack of sense is death to himself.

Mix with wise men, and you will be wise,
but a companion of fools will come to grief.

Proverbs 10:13, 14, 18-21; 13:20

"Hold fast to my instructions, never let them go,
keep them—they are life to you.

Never set foot upon a bad man's path,
and take not the road of evil men;
avoid it, never follow it,
shun it, and pass on.

For they cannot sleep till they have done some wrong,
till they have tripped up someone, they are sleepless;
they eat ill-gotten food
and drink wine won by cruelty.

The course of bad men lies through darkness dim,
they cannot see what makes them stumble;

the course of good men, like a ray of dawn
shines on and on to the full light of day."

Proverbs 4:13-19

"A rascal, a knave—
he works with falsehood on his lips,
he winks with his eyes and scrapes with his feet,
he signs with his fingers,
his mind is ever planning mischief,
he is always sowing discord;
so doom shall strike him suddenly,
suddenly, hopelessly, shall he be broken.
Six things the Eternal hates,
ay, seven he loathes:
haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
a mind with crafty plans,
feet eager to go mischief-making,
a false witness who tells lies,
and him who sows discord within his group."

Proverbs 6:12-19

Certain of the Psalms emphasize the importance of man's inner spirit. In Psalm 15 the man of character is described as having a sense of honor which makes it impossible for him to be deceitful or to wrong others by repeating lies and insults. Instead he is a man of his word who speaks with complete sincerity "from the heart," who cannot be bribed or pressured into betraying others, a man who can be trusted to hold to his promises regardless of the cost.

In thy pavilion, O Eternal, who may be a guest,
who may dwell on thy sacred hill?
He whose life is blameless, who does right,
he whose words are from the heart—
no scandal on his tongue, to hurt his fellow,

no insult heaped upon his neighbour;
 he has contempt for rogues,
 and honours those who reverence the Eternal;
 he keeps to his oath, though he may lose by it,
 he takes no interest on a loan;
 he is not to be bribed against the innocent—
 he, living so, shall never be rejected.

Psalm 15

One of the high points of the Old Testament is reached in Psalm 51. In one of the most beautiful prayers ever written, the ancient poet asks that his thoughts be purified, that mistakes be forgiven, that feelings of guilt be forgotten, in order that a right spirit may be recreated within him. He prays with full faith that human character is strengthened and guided by renewing its close spiritual relationship with the Spirit of God. Here is personal religion at its best: not depressing or limiting but affording the true source of joy, the means of removing all obstacles of guilt and fear, and releasing human personality for happier, fuller living.

"Tis inward truth that thou desirest;
 grant me then wisdom in my secret heart.
 Purge me clean with marjoram,
 wash me whiter than snow;
 fill me with gladness and rejoicing,
 that the life thou hast crushed may thrill with joy;
 hide thy face from my sins,
 and wipe out all my guilt;
 make me a clean heart, O God,
 and put a new, steadfast spirit in me;
 banish me not from thy presence,
 deprive me not of thy sacred Spirit;
 gladden me with thy saving aid again,
 and give me a willing spirit as my strength . . .

Psalm 51:6-12



CHAPTER 13

Concern for Others

THE most difficult assignment for all human beings is learning how to live with other people. There is plenty of evidence that most of us never learn how to do a good job. Instead the record is full of mistakes, tragedies, disappointments, conflicts, injustices, cruelties, wars. This sad state has not been due to anybody's wanting it that way. We have earnestly wished for happiness, love, fair dealing, kindness, joy, peace. What happens that causes so much trouble and prevents human beings from living together more happily?

One answer has it that men are by nature selfish, that they are more inclined to fight one another for what they want in jungle fashion than to consider the needs of others. For centuries it was thought necessary to frighten or punish such persons into being considerate, kind, sympathetic and helpful. The idea was that if people were sufficiently threatened here or in a life hereafter, they would give up their evil ways, and somehow become transformed into fair-minded, unselfish creatures. The trouble with this notion is that it proves false to the facts. The method of forcing people to live together more happily does not work. A boy may be punished for losing his temper and getting into a fight with a pal; sorry or afraid, he may resolve not to do it again. But if he knows no better way of solving problems and settling differences, he will sooner or later again use his fists.

One branch of learning, almost as modern as the automobile, is the study of human relationships. The sociologist analyzes in scientific fashion the evolution of such institutions as the family and the community. He is concerned about the many problems that arise out of the attempt of people to live together in families, in villages, in big cities, in nations, and even in a world where nations are brought closer and closer together through modern methods of communication, travel and trade. The sociologist is interested in the efforts of human beings to live together successfully and in all the influences that help or hinder communal living. He is continually looking for laws or methods that have guided men in the building of better relationships and that therefore point the way to greater progress in the future.

How then does the sociologist explain so much failure in human relationships? Like the psychologist, he rules out the notion that human nature is inherently selfish and evil. For proof, he points to the steady progress that has been made in the development of family life, of community living, of higher living standards, of greater opportunity for education, of institutions for the care of the sick, the aged, the unfortunate, and of organizations for the protection of human personality. To be sure, men have failed thus far to achieve the goals of which they are capable, but they have come a long way since early primitive days. Long centuries were spent in gaining mastery over the forces of nature and our physical environment, and that struggle for survival engendered mistaken ideas which gradually have to be outgrown and replaced as we discover more satisfactory ways of organizing community life.

Learning how to get along with other people, experts tell us, is as much a matter of growth as learning to walk or talk. It requires training and practice. From the time an infant reaches out instinctively for affection and companionship he should be given opportunity to develop his inborn capacity for justice, generosity and good will.

Above all, the sociologist calls attention to social responsibility as the great underlying principle which makes for progress in living. As men and women have felt an increasing sense of responsibility for the feelings, the needs and the well-being of their fellows, civilization has advanced toward higher levels. Thus the conclusions of modern analysis and research prove the fundamental rightness of a moral principle repeated again and again in the Old Testament thousands of years ago: that every person must accept responsibility for others. This concern must extend in ever-widening circles, starting with the members of one's own family and reaching out to the ends of the earth. This principle of social responsibility is now being underscored by the social scientist as the chief means of solving the problems which plague mankind and prevent the achievement of happiness and good will.

Some day you may want to trace the growth of this idea of responsibility as it developed in the Old Testament: from its earliest beginnings down through the centuries of tribal warfare and cruelties to the prophets' insistence upon kindness, justice, mercy. In the ancient folk tale about Cain and Abel, Cain asks the question, "Am I a shepherd to my brother?" It has taken thousands of years for mankind to learn that a man is not only his brother's keeper but that he is expected to love his neighbor, be kind to strangers, have mercy upon the unfortunate, and help even his enemies; and that his responsibility extends beyond his family or his nation to universal brotherhood in a warless world. The lesson is not yet understood by the great majority.

The surprising fact, however, is not that progress has been slow in cooperation and social responsibility, but that thousands of years ago there were men wise enough to recognize that human beings are capable of achieving in some measure the justice, mercy, respect for personality, and concern for one another that are characteristic of the Creator. This in-

sight into the nature of man and the fundamental principle of human relationships is as true today as when proclaimed more than 2,500 years ago.

The first four of the Ten Commandments dealt with man's attitude toward God. The other six Commandments have to do with man's attitude toward his fellow men. You will notice, as you read them, that responsibility begins at home, in respect for one's parents, and then extends out to consideration for the lives, the character, the home, and the property of others.

These laws are essential if people are to live together and go about their activities with confidence and a sense of security. If you are inclined to feel that they are out-of-date or to be taken for granted, notice in the headlines of this morning's newspaper the murder, theft, dishonesty, jealousy and envy reported there. The fears, tensions, tragedies of modern life are due to the sorry fact that many have not learned to put into practice this essential code of social responsibility.

“Honour your father and your mother, as the Eternal your God has ordered you, that you may have a long life and that all may go well with you in the land which the Eternal your God is giving you.

“You shall not murder
nor commit adultery,
nor steal,
nor give false evidence against a fellow-countryman,
nor lust after his wife, nor covet his household, his property,
his slaves, male or female, his ox, his ass, or anything that
belongs to a fellow-countryman.”

Deuteronomy 5:16-21

The wise men of the Old Testament went much farther than merely setting down a list of thou-shalt-nots to be ob-

served in one's treatment of others. They saw clearly that a full sense of responsibility meant a positive attitude of helpfulness, kindness, fair dealing, honesty, good nature. Like the modern psychologists, they warned against hate as a dangerous poison that harms the one who hates even more than the one who is hated. They insisted also that good will should extend beyond one's friends and fellow countrymen to the poor and unfortunate strangers or aliens, and even to one's enemies. This widening circle of responsibility is expressed in the following group of selections from Deuteronomy, Exodus, Leviticus, Proverbs, and the Psalms. Here in the Old Testament we find the commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself," which was to become so vital a part of the teachings of Jesus.

"If you have a poor man, one of your fellow-countrymen, in any township of the land which the Eternal your God gives you, you must not harden your heart nor shut your hand against your poor brother; you must open your hand to him, lending him enough to meet his needs. Beware of letting the mean thought enter your head, 'But the seventh year, the year of remission is near!' so that you grudge help to your poor brother and give him nothing, till he cries to the Eternal against you, and you incur guilt. You must give to him and give cheerfully, for that will make the Eternal bless you in all your work and in whatever you undertake. Poor folk will never cease to be in the land; hence I command you to open your hand to your fellows, to the destitute and needy in your land."

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

"You must not withhold your help from any ox or sheep of a fellow-countryman which you see going astray; you must be sure to take it back to your fellow-countryman. If he does not stay near you, or if you do not know who the owner is, take the animal home with you, and keep it till your fellow-

countryman claims it; then give it back to him. So with his ass, so with his garment, so with anything which a fellow-countryman loses and which you find; you must not withhold your help. You must not withhold your help from any ox or ass of a fellow-countryman which you see foundered by the wayside; you must be sure to help him to raise it up."

Deuteronomy 22:1-4

Never let kindness and loyalty go,
tie them fast round your neck;
so you shall have good will and good repute
with God and man alike.

Never refuse help to your neighbour,
when you can render it;
never say to him, "Go, and come again,
I will have it to-morrow for you"—
when you have it beside you!

Never plot mischief against your neighbour
as he lives near you unsuspecting.

Never quarrel with a man for no reason,
when he has never done you any harm.

Proverbs 3:3, 4, 27:30

A man who mocks at his neighbour has no sense:
the prudent man will hold his tongue.

A gossiping fellow will betray secrets,
but a trustworthy man will keep a confidence.

Proverbs 11:12, 13

Never give baseless evidence against your neighbour,
never mislead men by what you say.

Never think, "I will treat him as he treated me.
I will pay back the man for what he did."

Proverbs 24:28, 29

"You must never repeat a baseless rumour; never side with a bad man, to give malicious evidence. You must not follow a majority to do wrong, nor must you bear witness in court

so as to side with an unjust majority; neither must you be partial to a poor man's plea."

Exodus 23:1-3

A man who gives true evidence furthers justice;
dishonest witnesses further injustice.

A reckless tongue wounds like a sword,
but there is healing power in thoughtful words.

Truth told endures;
a lie lasts only for a little while.

Fraud is the aim of evil-minded men,
but those who plan the good of others prosper.

Injustice is no pleasure to the good,
but evil men are full of all injustice.

Liars are loathsome to the Eternal,
but the sincere are a delight to him.

Proverbs 12:17-22

To be forbearing is to show great sense;
the height of folly is to be quick-tempered.

Proverbs 14:29

A mild reply turns wrath aside,
but a sharp word will stir up anger.

A soothing tongue means life and peace,
but wild words wound.

Proverbs 15:1, 4

The rascal sets mischief afoot,
his words scorch like a fire.

The intriguer sows discord,
the tell-tale divides friend from friend.

The knave misleads his neighbour,
and draws him into evil courses.

The slanderer concocts a lie,
the detractor has designs of mischief.

Proverbs 16:27-30

When you reap your harvest, you must not reap the field to the very corners, nor gather the stray ears of the harvest; you must not glean your vineyard bare, nor pick up fallen grapes; leave them for poor folk and resident aliens: I am the Eternal your God.

You shall not steal; you shall not cheat, you shall not tell a lie. You shall not take a false oath in my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Eternal your God.

You shall not defraud your fellow, nor rob him; you shall not keep a hired labourer out of his pay till next morning.

You shall not curse a deaf man, nor trip up a blind man; stand in awe of your God: I am the Eternal. You shall not be guilty of any injustice; you shall not be partial to a poor man, nor defer to a powerful man; you must judge the case of a fellow-Israelite fairly.

You shall not go up and down slandering people; you shall not forge a charge of murder against a neighbour: I am the Eternal.

You shall not cherish hate against your fellow-countryman; what you must do is to warn him of his fault, lest you incur guilt yourself. You shall not avenge yourself, you shall not bear a grudge, against your fellow-citizens, but love your neighbour as you love yourself: I am the Eternal.

If an alien settles beside you in your land, you must not injure him; the alien who settles beside you shall be treated like a native, and you must love him as you love yourself; for you were aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt: I am the Eternal your God.

Leviticus 19:9-18, 33, 34

If you come across your enemy's ox or ass wandering, you must be sure to take it back to him; if you see the ass of a man who hates you lying helpless under its load, you must

not leave it all to him, you must help him to release the animal.

Exodus 23:4, 5

If your enemy is hungry give him food,
and give him water if he thirsts;
for so you shall quench blazing passions,
and the Eternal will reward you.

Proverbs 25:21, 22

One of the most romantic tales in the Old Testament is the story of Ruth. Like Jonah, Ruth is a literary character, a heroine of fiction, created by an ancient story-writer for his purpose. This Book was written about 350 b.c. during a period when the world was full of bitterness and intense hatreds as a result of cruel wars and widespread destruction by a series of conquerors. The little country of Palestine, the beloved Promised Land of the Hebrews, had been overrun by one army after another. When at last the Babylonians were defeated by the Persians, Cyrus the Great gave the Hebrew exiles permission to go back to their own country.

Some returned bringing with them not only hatred for their conquerors and the desire for vengeance, but bitterness against neighboring peoples. Life was difficult, crops were slow. Efforts to re-establish the proud little nation of David and Solomon and to maintain their customs were hindered by unfriendly neighbors who were therefore looked upon as aliens and enemies.

In this atmosphere of hatred, distrust and fear, the circle of social concern narrowed drastically until it included only members of the Hebrew nation. Marriages with foreigners were forbidden, and those who had already married aliens were required to break up their families and cast off both the wives and their children. It was a cruel and inhuman policy based on the mistaken notion of narrow nationalism and

racial purity. In the same dark period the hope of vengeance sprang up against all their enemies, expressed by the prophet Zechariah as well as by some of the later psalmists.

In the midst of these sorry days, shining like the ray of sunshine that creates a rainbow against a storm cloud, issued two of the greatest stories in the Bible: the Book of Jonah, pleading for forgiveness of one's enemies, and the Book of Ruth, urging an attitude of good will toward aliens as human beings worthy of understanding and consideration. We do not know who wrote these famous stories, but their authors somehow caught a vision of God as the great Shepherd and Father of mankind, concerned about every individual human being regardless of name, color or nationality.

Although Ruth belonged to a nation particularly hated by the Hebrews of her day, she commanded respect as an individual because of her unselfish devotion to others.

In the days when the heroes governed, there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to reside in the country of Moab, along with his wife and his two sons; the man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons were called Mahlon and Kilion, all Ephrathites belonging to Bethlehem in Judah. They went to the country of Moab and remained there.

Elimelek the husband of Naomi died, leaving her with her two sons, who married women of Moab, the one called Orpah and the other Ruth.

After they had stayed there for about ten years both Mahlon and Kilion died, so that Naomi was bereft of her two children and her husband. Then, as she heard in the country of Moab that the Eternal had remembered kindly to give his people food, she started home with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab.

She went from the place where she was, along with her two daughters-in-law; but, as they were setting out to go back

to the land of Judah, Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "You go back, each of you, to her mother's house. May the Eternal treat you kindly, as you have treated the dead and myself! May the Eternal let each of you find a settlement in the house of a husband!" Then she kissed them. But they wept loudly and said to her, "No, we will go back with you to your people."

Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you come with me? Have I any more sons in my womb to be husbands for you? Turn back, my daughters, go your way; I am too old to have a husband. Were I to say that I had hopes of marrying, if I even had a husband this night and bore sons, would you wait on till they had grown up? Would you let that debar you from marrying? No, my daughters, my plight is worse than yours, for the Eternal is against me." Again they wept aloud; Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and to her gods; turn back after her."

But Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave you and to turn back from following you; wherever you go, there will I go; wherever you stay, there will I stay; your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God; wherever you die, there will I die, and beside you will I be buried. May the Eternal kill me and worse, if anything but death part you and me." So when Naomi saw that she was determined to accompany her, she said no more.

The two went on till they reached Bethlehem. And the whole town was stirred by their arrival. The women said, "Is this Naomi?" "Call me not Naomi," she said, "call me Mara, for the Almighty has cruelly marred me; I left this place full, and the Eternal has brought me back empty-handed. Why call me Naomi, when the Eternal has turned against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?" This was how Naomi came back, with Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law, from the

country of Moab; the barley harvest was beginning when they reached Bethlehem.

Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a man of large property, who belonged to the family of Elimelek; his name was Boaz. Now Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the grain after some man with whom I may find favour." So she said, "Go, my daughter."

And when she went and gleaned in the field behind the reapers, it was her fortune to come upon that part of the field which belonged to Boaz, who was connected with the family of Elimelek. Just then Boaz came out from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, "May the Eternal be with you!" They replied, "May the Eternal bless you!" Then he asked the foreman of the reapers in his service, "Whose girl is this?" The foreman replied, "It is the Moabitish girl who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab; she asked to be allowed to glean and gather behind the reapers among the sheaves, and she has been working ever since morning, without stopping for a moment."

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now listen, my daughter. Glean in no other field, never leave this one, but stay here close to my girls. Keep your eyes on the field they are reaping and follow them up; I have strictly forbidden the young men to molest you. Whenever you are thirsty, go to the cans and drink what the young men have drawn."

Then she fell upon her face, bowing to the ground; she said to him, "Why have I found favour with you, that you should take notice of me? I am a foreigner." But Boaz replied, "I have been well informed of all you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband died, of how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people who were strange to you. May the Eternal reward your

services! May you receive a rich recompense from the Eternal, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought shelter!" She answered, "I am finding favour with you, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your maid-servant, even though I do not belong to your own maid-servants."

When the time came for the meal, Boaz said to her, "Come here, eat some of our bread, and dip your slice in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers, and he handed her roasted grain; she ate till she was satisfied, and had some left over. When she got up to glean, Boaz ordered his young men, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and never hinder her. Pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to glean; do not check her."

So she gleaned in the field till evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned (it was about a bushel of barley), and took it away with her to the town. She showed her mother-in-law what she had gleaned, and she also produced for her the food she had left over, after her hunger had been satisfied. Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean to-day? Where were you working? A blessing on the man who took some notice of you!"

So she explained to her mother-in-law whom she had been working with. "The name of the man with whom I worked to-day," she said, "was Boaz." And Naomi said to her, "May the Eternal bless him, the Eternal who has not ceased to be kind to the living and to the dead! The man is a relative of our own," added Naomi; "he is one of our near kinsmen."

Ruth 1:2:20

So Boaz fell in love with Ruth, and Ruth returned his love. But there was an ancient marriage law which required a dead man's nearest kinsman to marry his widow. Before he could claim Ruth as his wife, therefore, Boaz had to offer

the property of Naomi along with the privilege of marrying Ruth to Elimelek's closest relative.

Boaz had gone up to the town Gate and sat down. And there was the near kinsman of whom Boaz had spoken, passing by! So Boaz cried to him, "Ho, you! Step aside and sit down here!" The man stepped aside and sat down. Then Boaz got ten of the sheikhs of the town and bade them sit down also.

They sat down, and then he said to the near kinsman, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the plot of land which belonged to our kinsman Elimelek, and I thought I would lay the matter before you. Buy it in presence of those who are sitting here and in presence of the sheikhs of my people. If you will take up the property, take it up; but if you will not take it up, tell me, that I may know how things stand; for there is no one to take it up except yourself, and I come after you." The man said, "I will take it up."

Then Boaz said, "When you buy the field from Naomi, you are also buying Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of a dead man, so as to carry on the name of the dead along with his inheritance." But the near kinsman said, "I cannot take it up, for fear of injuring my own inheritance. Take over my rights yourself. I cannot take up the property."

Now to make any transaction valid, in the matter of taking up property and exchanging rights, the ancient custom in Israel was that a man drew off his shoe and handed it to the other party; this was how exchanges were attested in Israel. So when the near kinsman said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself," he drew off his shoe.

Then said Boaz to the sheikhs and all the people, "You are witnesses to-day that I have bought from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelek and Kilion and Mahlon. Also I have purchased Mahlon's wife, Ruth the Moabitess, to be my wife, that the name of the dead may be carried on along with his

inheritance, lest the name of the dead perish from among his kinsmen and from the Gate of his native place: you are witnesses of this to-day!" And all the people in the Gate and the sheikhs answered, "We are witnesses! May the Eternal make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel! Prosperity be yours in Ephrathah, and renown in Bethlehem! May your house flourish like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, with the offspring which the Eternal shall give you from this young woman!"

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife . . . and she bore a son. Then said the women to Naomi, "Blessed be the Eternal! He has this day provided you with a near kinsman. May his name be renowned in Israel! He will revive your life and nourish your old age, for he is born of your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better than seven sons to you."

Ruth 4:1-15

A passage in the Book of Isaiah, written some 300 years after the return of the Hebrews from Exile by an unknown prophet sometimes identified as the Second Isaiah, defines religion as far more than the carrying out of penances and fast-days in a frantic effort to please the Eternal. Religion, we are told, is not a matter of ritual or the repetition of a creed, but active concern with every form of human suffering and the willingness to reach out a helping hand to anyone in need. It was this high vision of social responsibility which became the basis of the religion of love and service taught by Jesus. From the ancient past comes a ringing challenge suitable for any age and particularly to our own, faced with the misery caused by two world wars and with the struggle against ruthless dictatorships that have enslaved millions of helpless victims.

"Fasting like yours to-day
will never bear your prayers on high.

Would I choose such a fast, such penances?
 To droop your head like a bulrush,
 to lie in sackcloth and ashes—
 is that what you call ‘fasting,’
 a day the Eternal would approve?

“Is not this my chosen fast,
 the Lord, the Eternal, asks,
 to loosen all that fetters men unfairly
 and to relax its grip,
 to free poor debtors from their bonds,
 and break what binds them?

“It is to share your food with hungry men,
 and take the homeless to your home,
 to clothe the naked when you see them,
 and never turn from any fellow-creature.

“Then shall light dawn for you,
 with healing for your wounds;
 you shall advance, your goodness in the van,
 and the Eternal’s glory as your rear-guard;
 the Eternal will answer when you call,
 and when you cry, he will say, ‘Here am I!’

“If you will do away with all oppression,
 with open scorn and words of malice,
 if you bestow your bread upon the hungry
 and relieve men in misery,
 then light shall dawn for you in darkness,
 your dull hour shall be bright as noon,
 and evermore shall the Eternal guide you,
 guarding you without fail;

he will refresh you in dry places,
 and renew your strength,
 till you are like a watered garden,
 like an oasis with a steadfast spring.”



CHAPTER 14

Social Justice

NO ONE likes the bully who takes unfair advantage of those who are smaller or less fortunate. Every age has exhibited flagrant examples of the abuse of power and privilege, individuals and groups who took every opportunity to deny the rights or exploit the lives of others not so powerful. Such were the tyrants of ancient times who built their position on greed, trampling the rights of ordinary citizens. Such too were the rugged individualists known as "robber barons" who amassed vast fortunes a century ago by ruining their competitors, exploiting cheap labor, manipulating the stock market, and securing the passage of legislative measures favorable to their own selfish interests but damaging to the interests of the public.

Such also are the racketeers, large and small, of our own day who misuse the power of the courts for their own ends, finding ways to twist the law into devious meanings, hiring witnesses willing to give evidence to support their cunning, bribing judges into rendering decisions in their favor, thus succeeding year after year in evading the penalties of the law and continuing to prey on honest citizens and legitimate business.

Some people argue that if a man is smart enough to acquire wealth or influence, he deserves to keep it, though it is won at others' expense. Is there any law against success, they ask?

The answer is emphatically that there is a moral law as sure and severe as the physical law which holds the stars in their

courses. It is the principle, proclaimed repeatedly in the Old Testament, which requires every man to deal fairly and justly with his fellow men, whether they are rich or poor, strong or weak, fortunate or helpless. This law of social justice is above and beyond man-made codes and statutes. It is essential to progress, security and peace in human relationships. It is a fundamental principle in a law-abiding universe created by a God of justice, mercy and love. To disregard it is to play havoc with the lives and fortunes of other human beings, and the penalties are certain to be heavy. The unscrupulous bully who takes unfair advantage of others in business, in government, in the law courts, in any situation of life, will not only pay dearly in loss of good will and happiness; he will eventually find himself spiritually bankrupt, an empty shell of a man who has missed the high purpose of living and finds existence burdensome. Social injustice becomes a fatal weakness, ultimately destroying the inner strength and character of men and nations.

Insistence upon justice appears first in the little group of ancient laws in the 22d and 23d Chapters of Exodus which are known as the Book of the Covenant, dating back to a thousand years before Christ. The injunction is repeated in the older sections of the Book of Proverbs, the collection of wise sayings taken from Persian and Egyptian philosophers during the period of the Exile.

You must not oppress a widow or an orphan; if ever you oppress them and if ever they cry to me, I will listen to their cry, and my wrath shall blaze till I kill you in war, leaving your own wives widows and your own children orphans.

If you lend money to any poor man of my people, you must not treat him as his creditor, nor must you exact interest from him. If you ever take a fellow-countryman's garment in pledge you must give it back to him by sun-down; for that is the only rug he has, the mantle for his body. What else can

he sleep in? If he cries to me, I will listen to his cry, for I am pitiful.

You must never tamper with a poor man's rights in court. Avoid false charges, never have innocent and guiltless people put to death, nor acquit bad men. You must never accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds even men whose eyes are open, and it destroys the case of a good man.

Exodus 22:22-27; 23:6-8

He who is hard on the forlorn reviles his Maker:
he honours his Maker who is kindly to the poor.

Better a little with honesty,
than a large income with injustice.

Justice and fairness
please the Eternal more than sacrifices.

Rob not the poor because he is poor,
waste not the weak with lawsuits;
for the Eternal will take their part,
he will rob robbers of their life.

Proverbs 14:31; 16:8; 21:3; 22:22, 23

The story of Naboth's vineyard contained in the First Book of Kings tells how the wicked queen Jezebel used fraud and trickery to take from a poor man a piece of the land which he declined to sell to Ahab, the king of Israel, during the first half of the ninth century B.C. Admirable indeed was the courage of the prophet Elijah who more than once risked his life by condemning the arbitrary methods of Jezebel and the king.

Now Naboth of Jezreel had a vineyard close to the palace of Ahab, the Samaritan king. Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard that I may make it a vegetable garden, for it is near my palace. I will give you a better vineyard in place of it, or, if you prefer it, I will give you its value in money."

"The Eternal forbid," said Naboth, "that I should ever give away my fathers' property to you!" Ahab went home chafing and sullen; he lay down on his bed covering his face and refusing to take any food.

His wife Jezebel came and asked him, "Why are you so depressed that you cannot eat?" He said to her, "I asked Naboth of Jezreel to let me buy his vineyard or, if he preferred it, to let me give him another vineyard in place of it, and he said he would not give me his vineyard." Jezebel his wife said to him, "And are you not in command of Israel's kingdom? Get up and take some food; cheer up, I will get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

So she wrote a letter in Ahab's name, sealing it with his seal, and sending it to the sheikhs and the freemen who managed the town of Jezreel along with Naboth. In the letter she wrote, "Proclaim a fast, put Naboth to the front among the townsfolk, and get two rascals to confront him and charge him with having cursed God and the king; then away with him outside the town and stone him to death."

The citizens, that is, the sheikhs and freemen who managed Naboth's town, did as Jezebel sent them instructions. They proclaimed a fast, they put Naboth to the front among the townsfolk, and the two rascals came and sat before him; these two rascals charged him, charged Naboth, before the people, with having cursed God and the king. Then he was taken outside the town and stoned to death. They sent word to Jezebel that Naboth had been stoned to death; and when Jezebel heard it, she said to Ahab, "Go and take possession of Naboth's vineyard at Jezreel, which he refused to let you buy, for Naboth is not alive but dead." As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab started off to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

Now this word from the Eternal came to Elijah the Tishbite: "Away down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who resides at

Samaria; he is in the vineyard of Naboth, he has gone down to take possession of it. Tell him this from the Eternal: 'You have killed and you have taken possession, have you?' Tell him this from the Eternal: 'Where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, there shall dogs lick up your own blood.'"

Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me out, O my enemy!" He answered, "I have found you out. Because you have sold yourself to no purpose in doing what is evil in the sight of the Eternal, I bring evil on you, I will sweep you off, stripping Ahab of every male child, and of free and fettered alike in Israel; . . . Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city, the dogs shall devour him; anyone who dies out in the country, wild birds shall eat him up." . . .

When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth, he fasted, he slept in sackcloth, and bore himself submissively.

I Kings 21:1-21, 24, 27

Nearly a century after the days of Elijah, about the middle of the eighth century B.C., a fresh and vigorous protest was uttered by a shepherd-farmer named Amos against the cruel exploitation of the weak and helpless by the strong and powerful. As we noted on page 29, he was the first to insist that God is the Champion of Justice, who expects man to deal justly with his fellows.

Amos tended his sheep and raised figs in the hill country south of Jerusalem, taking his fruit to the trading centers of Samaria and Bethel where the deeds of Jezebel had not been forgotten. On these trips he was shocked by what he saw: the sharp dealing of traders who gave short weight and small measure, the corruption of judges who could be bribed with a pair of shoes into rendering unfair decisions and handing over an honest man as a slave, the defrauding of the needy and the oppression of the poor. With words of righteous in-

dignation that still ring across the centuries, he proclaimed that such wickedness and cruelty would not go unpunished. The Eternal, Amos said, is not blinded by empty ritual or animal sacrifices, by the paying of tithes or a public display designed to cover up dishonesty and inhuman practices; and no unjust and cruel nation can long survive in a universe created and directed by the God of Law and Justice.

The Eternal declares:

"After crime upon crime of Israel
I will not relent,
for they sell honest folk for money,
the needy for a pair of shoes,
they trample down the poor like dust,
and humble souls they harry; . . ."

Listen to this, you cows of Bashan,
you women in high Samaria,
you who defraud the poor and are hard on the needy,
who tell your husbands, 'Let us have wine to drink!'
As sure as I am God, the Lord Eternal swears,
your day is coming,
when you will be dragged out with prongs,
the last of you with fish-hooks;
out you go, through breaches in the walls,
each of you headlong,
chased to mount Hermon—
by order of the Eternal.

Go to Bethel, go on with your sins!
pile sin on sin at Gilgal!
ay, sacrifice in the morning,
and every third day pay your tithes,
burn your dough as a thank-offering,
announce your freewill gifts—
oh, make them public,
for you love that, you Israelites!

You who make justice a bitter thing,
 trampling on the law,
 hating a man who exposes you,
 loathing him who is honest with you!
 For this, for crushing the weak,
 and forcing them to give you grain,
 houses of ashlar you may build,
 but you shall never dwell in them;
 vineyards you may plant,
 but you shall drink no wine from them.
 I know your countless crimes,
 your manifold misdeeds—
 browbeating honest men, accepting bribes,
 defrauding the poor of justice.

Your sacred festivals: I hate them, scorn them;
 your sacrifices? I will not smell their smoke;
 you offer me your gifts? I will not take them;
 you offer fatted cattle? I will not look at them.
 No more of your hymns for me!
 I will not listen to your lutes.

No, let justice well up like fresh water,
 let honesty roll in full tide.

Amos 2:6, 7; 4:1-5; 5:7, 10-12, 21-24

Years went by, and the warnings of Amos went unheeded. Then a generation later another prophet cried out bitterly against the oppression of the weak and helpless by the unscrupulous. This time it was the prophet Micah. He too was a farmer living in a village on the western border of Judah. On every side he saw small farmers being robbed of their houses and lands; innocent women evicted from their homes and little children branded as slaves; judges and priests so greedy for money that they were eager for bribes, thus becoming accomplices in the injustices of their day. Like Amos, Micah announced that there would be a day of reckoning

when the entire nation would be punished and its cities would be destroyed.

The prophecies of both Amos and Micah were partially fulfilled a few years later when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and carried thousands of Hebrews away into exile.

Woe to men who on their beds
some mischief plan,
and carry it out when morning comes,
because they can!—
coveting fields and seizing them,
coveting houses and snatching them,
crushing yeomen and their homes,
smallholders and their livings.

“Therefore,” the Eternal declares,
“I plan something, plan a fate
from which you cannot shake you free,
nor rid you of its crushing weight:
so evil is the time.”

“For talk like that you lose your share
in the community of the Eternal!
Stop it,” they cry,
“such harping is not prophecy;
no shameful fate can e'er o'ertake the house of Jacob.
Is the Eternal's temper quick?
Is that how he would act?
Are not his words to Israel kind?”
The prophet for such folk
would be some empty fellow and a liar,
who promised to prophesy of wine and spirits!

You are the worst foes of my folk,
attacking peaceful men,
and plundering quiet passers-by,
evicting women from their happy homes,

branding their babes with slavery.
 Away with you! begone!
 this is no place for you!—depravity
 shall ruin you beyond all remedy.

But I [Micah] am full of strength and skill and courage,
 inspired by the Eternal,
 to let Jacob know its crimes,
 and Israel its sins.

Leaders of Jacob, listen to this,
 you judges over the house of Israel,
 who spurn at justice and twist equity,
 who build your Sion up with bloodshed
 and Jerusalem on crime:
 judges passing verdicts for a bribe,
 priests pattering oracles for pay,
 prophets divining for money,
 and all the while relying on the Eternal,
 saying, "Surely the Eternal is among us;
 no evil can befall us!"

Therefore on your account
 shall Sion be ploughed up like a field,
 Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
 the temple-hill merely a wooded height.

Micah 2:1-3, 5-7, 11, 8-10; 3:8-12

About the same time that Micah was prophesying the destruction of the sacred city, the First Isaiah issued his severe indictment of the people and their rulers.

"Your hands are full of bloodshed;
 wash yourselves clean,
 banish your evil doings,
 from my sight,
 cease to do wrong,
 learn to do right,
 make justice all your aim,

and put a check on violence,
 let orphans have their rights,
 uphold the widow's cause."

Woe to those who issue harsh decrees,
 penning orders that oppress,
 robbing the weak of their rights,
 and defrauding the poor of their dues,
 till widows fall to them as spoil,
 and orphans as their prey.

Isaiah 1:16, 17; 10:1, 2

Next in the great procession of prophets who urged social justice as an essential law of life was Jeremiah. He sternly rebuked Jehoiakim, king of Judah, for his cruel tyranny, reminding him that his father, Josiah, had been a just and merciful ruler. Jeremiah's warning was well timed. Already a vassal of Egypt, the kingdom was taken over by the Babylonians in 604 B.C. They captured Jerusalem and the king died during the siege, ingloriously and unlamented. His son surrendered the city and was carried away into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar.

Woe to him who builds his palace on injustice,
 his chambers upon fraud,
 who forces other men to work for nothing,
 holding back their wages,
 who thinks to build himself a spacious palace,
 with roomy chambers and with windows wide,
 paneling it with cedar
 and painting it vermilion!
 Are you a king indeed,
 because you vie with Ahab?
 Did not your father enjoy himself?—
 and he ruled justly, lawfully.
 Did he not uphold the rights of weak and wretched men?
 And is not that the true knowledge of me?

But you have neither eyes nor heart
 for aught but selfish gain,
 for shedding innocent blood,
 for outrage and oppression.

This therefore is the Eternal's sentence upon Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah:

"There shall be no lamenting for him—
 as men lament a brother or a sister;
 there shall be no lamenting for him—
 as men lament 'My lord!' 'His Majesty!'
 As an ass is buried, shall he be buried,
 haled along, hurled outside the city gates."

Jeremiah 22:13-19

In contrast with these dire warnings, here is an inspiring description of a man who lived up to the ideals of justice and fair dealing. The following passage is taken from the Book of Job, the great poetic drama written about 400 b.c., in which a man's faith in God is tested by intense suffering. When Job's friends insisted that all his calamities were punishment for sin, Job made this eloquent plea in defense of his own record.

"Let God take scales of justice to my life,
 and he would own that I am innocent!"

"If ever I ignored the rightful claim
 of any servant, man or woman,
 what could I do when God rose up?
 If he took me to task, what could I say?
 No, I feared suffering at the hands of God;
 I could not do it, in my dread of him.
 Did not my Maker make my servant too,
 and form us both alike within the womb?

"I never grudged a poor man anything,
 I never let a widow pine in want;

I never ate my bite of food alone
 and did not share it with the fatherless.
 For, like a father, God has brought me up,
 caring for me since ever I was born.

"If ever I saw any perishing
 for lack of clothing, naked in their need,
 and did not warm them with my fleeces,
 till they blessed me for covering them;
 if ever I sued unoffending men,
 because I knew the verdict would be mine;
 then may my shoulder drop from its socket,
 my arm snap from the collarbone!

"If ever my land accused me,
 if the furrows all complained with tears,
 that I paid not for the fields I worked,
 or murdered those who owned the land,
 may thorns grow up instead of wheat,
 foul weeds for barley!"

Job 31:6, 13, 14, 23, 15-22, 38-40

It would be a mistake to suppose that only a few powerful men are in a position to mistreat or exploit their fellow men. That person or group, young or old, rich or poor, is guilty of injustice who takes unfair advantage of any situation to impose his will arbitrarily, without due regard for the desires and rights of others; who uses any means whatever to gain selfish ends, regardless of the humiliation, suffering or hardship that may be caused others. The invisible scales of justice must be kept in balance: in homes, in schools, in churches and clubs, in sports and in politics, on farms and in communities, in national and international affairs.

. . . let justice well up like fresh water,
 let honesty roll in full tide.

Amos 5:24



CHAPTER 15

A True Sense of Values

HOW would you answer the question, "What do you want most?" Is it wealth or fame or popularity or power, the strength of an athlete or the brains of a scientist, the talent of a musician or the skill of a surgeon, the beauty of a movie star or the mechanical genius of an engineer, the chance to travel about the earth or to take a trip to the moon? These are a few of the answers that might flood your mind. We live in an amazing world, with a multitude of opportunities far surpassing those offered in any other period in history. We are in a position to make wishes come true which Aladdin with his magic lamp could never have imagined. With so many possibilities open to us, our answer becomes increasingly difficult, yet increasingly important.

Consciously or unconsciously, sooner or later, all of us develop a standard of values, and we place at the top the item or items we most desire. Whether we realize it or not, this sense of worth determines how we spend our time and energy, what we think about, how we select our friends, what we do with our money, what we are willing to sacrifice in order to reach our goals.

There are some people of course who talk about one set of values and live by another. They are always planning to do great things, to develop a talent, to invent something momentous, or to reach out a hand to someone who needs encouragement. But somehow the time to get started never

arrives. Life hurries along, years pass, and they never succeed in organizing their lives around what they know to be the true criterion. Like children in a toy shop, they allow themselves to be continually distracted, absorbed in non-essential details.

Dissatisfaction and regret result also from a false sense of values, the choice of goals which, when reached, fail to bring satisfaction. You remember the old story of King Midas who wanted gold more than anything else in the world and was granted the miraculous golden touch. When he touched his cup and plate, they turned to gold, and he was overjoyed. Then he touched his food and it too turned to gold, so that he could not eat. His clothing turned to gold and became unbearable. Finally, he touched his daughter whom he dearly loved and the child was transformed into a golden statue, glittering but cold and lifeless. King Midas realized too late that gold is not the most precious or the most desirable thing in the world; he had paid far too high a price for the golden touch.

There are still many men and women who, like Midas, place wealth at the top of the scale as the thing which they would be willing to spend the best years of their lives acquiring. The man who desires money more than anything else devotes all his resources to business, selects as friends those who promote his financial interests, gives up the companionship of his wife and children, and even sacrifices the welfare of others to achieve success.

At this point, you may say that money is very important; that every family must have it to secure food, clothing and a house to live in; that money is necessary for the building of schools, churches, hospitals, libraries, research laboratories, and art museums; that without it young people cannot secure an education or the training required for the full development of personality. You are right. We live in what the economist calls "a money economy," where we are dependent

upon money as a medium of exchange for the necessities of life as well as various forms of cultural activity. Therefore, most of us are tempted to consider money the most valuable object in life.

But there is a vast difference between money sufficient to accomplish a worthy purpose and an accumulation of money for its own sake. The scientist wants enough money to provide a laboratory and ample income for his family, but a large bank account would not lure him away from his search for truth nor persuade him to falsify his findings. The musician wants enough money to secure the best possible training, but his years of practice and discipline are inspired by his love of music and the desire to create beauty, not by the purpose of making money. The wise statesman knows that his people need a satisfactory standard of living, but will not push national material gains to the point where justice and good will in international relationships are sacrificed.

Thus a sense of values becomes not only a basis of choice but a matter of emphasis. In the long run your primary goal determines what you are willing to work for the hardest, sacrifice the most, and thus pay the greatest price to attain. You will subordinate other interests to this major concern. If you choose wisely, you will achieve increasing satisfaction, strength of character, and joy in living. If you choose foolishly and sacrifice genuine values for the sake of some unworthy goal, or spend your life on insignificant details of day-to-day existence, life will eventually become meaningless.

What is it then that makes life worth living? What should we strive for during the sixty or seventy years that we spend on this planet? This question of lasting value, of the greatest good, is the one which the philosophers of every age have tried to answer.

One answer is contained in the story of Solomon, who as a young prince inherited an extensive kingdom from his father, the beloved King David. He faced the heavy task of ruling

over all the tribes of Israel as well as the neighboring peoples whom David had conquered. In those early days, nearly a thousand years before Christ, the monarch of such an empire might have been expected to rule with a heavy hand, without much attention to law or justice, motivated by a desire for personal power and pleasure. But Solomon took his task more seriously and realized that what he needed most was wisdom: not merely knowledge of facts, but the judgment and vision which would enable him to render just decisions and plan constructively the activities of his people.

Now Solomon had complete control of the kingdom. Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate and drank and enjoyed themselves. Judah and Israel were safe, every man living under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, from Dan to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon; for he ruled all west of the Euphrates, from Thapsakus to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates, and he enjoyed peace on every side.

Now Solomon loved the Eternal, living by the rules laid down by his father David; . . . One day the king went to sacrifice at Gibeon, as that was the chief shrine; a thousand victims Solomon used to sacrifice on the altar there. The Eternal appeared to Solomon in a dream by night at Gibeon; God said to him, "Ask what I am to give you."

Solomon answered, "Thou hast proved thyself most generous to thy servant David my father, as he lived before thee a loyal and honest life with upright mind, and thou hast reserved this great boon for him, a son to sit upon his throne this day. And now, O Eternal my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father; and I am a mere child, I know not how to go about my business. Thy servant is surrounded by thine own chosen people, a vast host, too great to be numbered or counted. So grant thy servant a

thoughtful mind for governing thy people, that I may distinguish right and wrong. For who can bear the weight of this government?"

It pleased the Eternal that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, because you have asked neither long life for yourself nor wealth for yourself nor death to your enemies, but insight and justice, I now do as you have asked; I hereby give you a wise, thoughtful mind, so that never afterwards shall your equal rise, as never has your equal lived. Also, I give you what you did not ask, both wealth and honour, so that no king shall ever be your equal. And if you will live my life, keeping my rules and orders, as did your father David, I will give you a long life." Then Solomon woke; it was a dream! . . .

Two harlots then came to the king and stood before him. One woman said, "O my lord, this woman and I live in the same house. I bore a child in the house beside her, and three days later she bore a child also; we were together, there was no one else in the house, only we two by ourselves. During the night her child died, for she overlaid it. So she got up at midnight and took away my child, while your humble servant was asleep; she laid the child in her bosom and put her dead child in my bosom. When I rose in the morning to suckle my child, there it lay dead! But as I looked at it carefully in the morning-light, it was not my son whom I had borne."

The other woman said, "No, the living child belongs to me, the dead is yours!" The first woman retorted, "No, the dead child belongs to you, the living child is mine!" So they wrangled before the king. The king mused: "One says, 'This living son is mine, the dead belongs to you'; the other says, 'No, the dead son is yours, mine is the living one.'" Then said the king, "Fetch me a sword." A sword was brought in.

The king then gave his orders, "Cut the living child in two, and give half to the one, half to the other."

At this the mother of the living child, whose heart yearned for her boy, cried to the king, "O my lord, give her the living child, never kill it!" The other woman said, "No, divide it; neither of us shall have it."

The king replied, "Give yonder woman the living child, instead of killing it; she is its mother!" All Israel heard of this decision of the king, and they stood in awe of the king, seeing that he had God's own wisdom for doing justice.

So in wealth and in wisdom king Solomon excelled all kings on earth. The whole world came to visit Solomon, to listen to the wisdom which God had put into his mind, and everyone brought his present, silver articles, gold articles, robes, weapons, and spices, horses and mules, so much year by year. When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and the temple he had built in honour of the Eternal, she came to test him with puzzling questions. She came to Jerusalem with a very large retinue, with camels bearing spices, heaps of gold, and jewels. As soon as she reached Solomon, she opened out all that was on her mind; and Solomon answered all her questions; there was not a single thing hidden from the king which he could not explain to her. When the queen of Sheba realized all this wisdom of Solomon, when she saw the palace he had built, the food at his table, the way his courtiers were arranged and his servants waited, and their dress, and the cup-bearers, and the burnt-offerings he used to sacrifice in the temple of the Eternal, she was quite overwhelmed; she said to the king, "That was a true tale I heard in my own country of your words and wisdom! But I did not believe it till I came and saw for myself. And now I see not half was told me; your wisdom and prosperity far exceed what I was told. Happy are your wives!

Happy men, these courtiers who are always waiting upon you and hearing your wisdom! Blessed be the Eternal your God who delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! It is because the Eternal loved Israel that he made you king, to govern and administer justice!"

I Kings 4:21, 20, 25, 24; 3:3, 2, 4-18; 10:23-25, 1-9

As the years passed, however, King Solomon lost sight of his chief goal and his sense of values became distorted. He was absorbed by his riches, his palaces, his many wives, and their strange gods.

Now king Solomon was a lover of women; he had seven hundred royal wives, and three hundred mistresses. He married many foreign women—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Phoenicians, and Hittites—belonging to nations against whom the Eternal had warned the men of Israel, "You must not mix with them, nor let them mix with you, for they will be sure to seduce you to follow their gods." Solomon clung to these women in love.

When he grew old, he had no undivided mind for the Eternal his God, as his father David had; his wives seduced him to follow foreign gods. Solomon did what was evil in the eyes of the Eternal; he did not follow the Eternal faithfully, as his father David had done. For he put up shrines for Astarte, the goddess of the Phoenicians, and for Milkom, the detestable idol of the Ammonites, and for Kemosh, the detestable idol of Moab, on a hill to the east of Jerusalem. He did the same for all his foreign wives, burning incense and offering sacrifice to their gods.

The Eternal was angry with Solomon for letting himself be seduced from the Eternal, the God of Israel, who had twice appeared to him and given him this order, that he was not to follow foreign gods; he did not obey what the Eternal

had ordered, and so the Eternal said to Solomon, "Since this is your mind, since you have not obeyed my compact and the rules I laid down for you, I will tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do this during your lifetime, for the sake of David your father; I will tear it out of your son's hands. Still, I will not tear away all the kingdom; I will let your son have one clan, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

I Kings 11:3, 1, 2, 4, 6, 5, 7-13

As a result, after the death of Solomon the kingdom was torn by unrest, and rebellion severed it into two parts. Never again did the throne regain the prosperity and prestige it enjoyed during the reigns of David and Solomon.

In sharp contrast with Solomon's glory is the simple definition of what is good given by the peasant-prophet Micah three hundred years after Solomon's power had vanished. He saw men so greedy for riches that they were willing to destroy the livelihood, the well-being, the freedom, even the lives of other men, women and children. He, therefore, urged people to place justice, kindness and understanding of God above all other aims.

O man, he has told you what is good;
 what does the Eternal ask from you
 but to be just and kind
 and live in quiet fellowship with your God?

Micah 6:8

Throughout the Book of Proverbs and the Psalms the same warning is sounded against reliance on wealth and earthly power.

He who relies on his wealth shall wither,
 but a good man blooms like a green leaf.

He who stints his household ends with empty hands—
a fool like that becomes a wise man's slave.

Life thrives like a tree on generosity,
but grasping greed is death to men.

Proverbs 11:28-30

Better a little, with reverence for the Eternal,
than large wealth with worry.

Better a dish of vegetables, with love,
than the best beef served with hatred.

Proverbs 15:16, 17

Reputation is a better choice than riches;
esteem is more than money. . . .

Toil not to grow rich;
renounce that aim:
wealth is no sooner seen than gone,
it makes wings for itself,
like an eagle flying skyward.

Proverbs 22:1; 23:4, 5

The writer of Psalm 49 makes the profound observation that money cannot buy the essential spirit of life, either here or hereafter. He remarks that a man "can take nothing with him when he dies," a line which furnished both the theme and the title of a well-known modern play.

Hear this, all ye nations,
listen, all ye inhabitants of the world,
low-born and high,
rich and poor, all of you.
My message will be wise and good,
a baffling truth on which I brood;
and as I catch its meaning dim,
I render on the lyre this hymn:

Why should I be afraid in evil times,
 when all around I behold treacherous foes,
 men who rely upon their riches,
 and boast of their abounding wealth?

Why, none can buy himself off;
 not one can purchase for a price from God,
 soul's ransom is too dear,
 life that shall never end.

What! "Never die?" but die they must—
 men of sense have to die,
 stupid and senseless perish,
 leaving their wealth to others;
 their home eternal is the grave below,
 a dwelling where they must remain;
 they vanish from men's memory, although
 they claimed lands for their own.
 For all the splendour that they cherish,
 men pass, even as the beasts that perish.

Such is the fate of the self-satisfied,
 the end of all whose faith is in themselves;
 death shepherds them unchecked,
 driving them down to the world below,
 ere long their form and fashion waste away,
 and they abide within the world below.

But God can ransom me;
 he will release me from the grasp of death.

So fear not when a man grows rich,
 and when the splendour of his house increases;
 he can take nothing with him when he dies,
 his splendour will not follow him below.

In life he flatters himself on his fortune,
 praising himself for his prosperity;
 but down he goes to where his fathers dwell,
 who see no light to all eternity.

Thus the wise men of the Old Testament realized that the invisible spirit is of far greater value than any amount of material wealth or influence a man manages to accumulate. It was this theme which Jesus selected and illustrated again and again in dramatic parables, urging men and women to seek the eternal riches of character.



CHAPTER 16

Faith in the Future

NEWSPAPERS remind us daily that our world is full of calamity and conflict, famine and disease, war and rumors of war. In such times even the most optimistic person is tempted to ask whether it is foolish to go on believing in the eventual triumph of right over wrong and in the possibility of creating a better world. Is life on this planet subject to moral law or merely a topsy-turvy existence without meaning, an endless treadmill forever being turned by marching feet of weary humanity coming from nowhere and going nowhere, without direction, without progress, without hope?

Accepting the easy answer to this question means agreeing with the cynical, self-centered writer of Ecclesiastes to whom life was "a vain, futile business." If you wonder why so pessimistic a book was included in the Bible, you must remember that the Old Testament is a record of human development, containing evidence of man's mistakes as well as his progress in the discovery of truth. Written two hundred years or more before Jesus, Ecclesiastes voices the cry of despair which is the response of some people in every age.

So I hated life; for all that goes on under the sun seemed evil to me, all of it vain and futile. I hated all that I had toiled at under the sun, knowing that I must leave it to the man who follows me.

For what good does a man get himself from all the toil and strain of his labour in this world? All through life his task

is a sheer pain and vexation, day after day; the very night brings no rest to his mind.

Ecclesiastes 2:17, 18, 22, 23

Such pessimism makes human life meaningless. All effort becomes foolish indeed. If every advance in art, science, philosophy and religion is to be wiped out eventually, if the gains of each civilization achieved at terrific cost of energy and suffering are to be finally lost, it would be more sensible to give up the struggle and to live only for the moment, enjoying whatever pleasure we can find, without regard for any standard of right and wrong.

Fortunately, however, there is another answer that has inspired men to go on believing in the possibility of discovering new continents, new cures for disease, new sources of energy, new solutions for human problems, new ways to create a better world. This answer fires men and women with the courage to face apparently insuperable obstacles, and to achieve the seemingly impossible.

This is the answer that one finds proclaimed over and over again with stirring confidence by the poets and prophets of the Old Testament. Their faith shines brighter against the dark pessimism of Ecclesiastes. For example, Psalm 37 gives assurance that God is forever on the side of justice and truth.

Fret not over evildoers,
envy not the lawless;
soon like grass they fade,
and wither like a green blade.

Trust in the Eternal and do right,
be loyal to him within his land;
make the Eternal your delight,
and he will give you all your heart's desire.

Leave all to him, rely on him,
and he will see to it;
he will bring your innocence to light
and make the justice of your cause clear as noonday.

I saw a godless man once on a time, a terror—
towering like any cedar of Lebanon;
then, as I passed by, he was gone!
I looked for him—he was not to be found.

Hold to integrity, remain upright;
there is a future for the peaceable.
But sinners shall be wiped out at a blow;
the future for the godless is perdition.

Help comes from the Eternal to good men;
he is their refuge in the evil hour:
the Eternal relieves them and rescues them,
because they shelter beside him.

Psalm 37:1-6, 35-40

If ever men had reason to be utterly discouraged about the prospects of humanity, it was the extraordinary group of Hebrew prophets who lived in the eighth and seventh centuries before Christ. We can well imagine that it was difficult to maintain faith in those half-civilized days when the struggle for existence was cruel and ruthless, when deadly pestilence and famine plagued every nation, and wars of conquest went on unceasingly.

The prophets were no blind visionaries who shut their eyes to the suffering and injustices around them. On the contrary, they were painfully sensitive to the oppression of the weak by the strong, to dishonesty and selfish greed, to the many crimes of which human beings were guilty.

Yet each one, without exception, proclaimed that the universe is inherently good rather than evil, and that God is not ignorant and heedless of what goes on, but a Champion of Justice who sooner or later punishes the wrongs of humanity and provides a firm guarantee for the ultimate triumph of right and truth.

How could they exhibit such confidence in the midst of

death, destruction and war? If you have flown in an airplane fifteen or twenty thousand feet above the earth, you know how amazingly different hills and valleys appear from such an altitude. The highest mountains appear as ridges on the surface; the deepest valleys are smoothed out and highlighted by brilliant sunlight. Just so the prophets stood on the mountaintops of human experience from which they could take a long look ahead. They did not allow themselves to be blinded or confused by the tragedy of the moment or of the immediate future. They faced with courage the hardships of defeat and exile because they looked beyond to brighter days when all their hopes would be fulfilled.

In a thrilling passage that still inspires hope, the prophet Micah predicted the end of war and the establishment of justice and peace on the earth. His vision becomes more impressive when we remember it was written during one of the darkest periods of Hebrew history, at the same time that he was also predicting the destruction of Jerusalem by Assyria, the most ruthless of all ancient conquerors.

In after days it shall be
that the Eternal's hill shall rise,
towering over every hill,
and higher than the heights.
Nations shall stream to it,
and many a people shall exclaim,
"Come, let us go to the Eternal's hill,
to the house of Jacob's God,
that he may instruct us in his ways,
to walk upon his paths."
For instruction comes from Sion,
and from Jerusalem the Eternal's word.
He will decide disputes of many races,
and arbitrate between strong foreign powers,
till swords are beaten into ploughshares,

spears into pruning-hooks;
no nation draws the sword against another,
no longer shall men learn to fight,
but live each underneath his vine,
and underneath his fig-tree,
in terror of no one:
for so the lips of the Lord of hosts decree.

Micah 4:1-4

This same faith in future peace and prosperity was expressed by Jeremiah a hundred years later. The following passages were composed while he was imprisoned in the guard-house of the king's palace at Jerusalem, discredited and persecuted because he had tried to warn his people that the Babylonians would return and destroy the city. Already these Chaldean conquerors had carried away thousands of Hebrews into captivity. Yet in such desperate straits, when his own fate seemed hopeless and the future of his nation extremely dark, Jeremiah wrote with full faith of brighter days to come.

Listen to the Eternal's word, ye nations,
spread the news to far-off isles;
"He who scattered Israel gathers them,
and tends them as a shepherd tends his flock.
For the Eternal has set Jacob free,
and rescued him from a stronger power.
So they shall gather singing on the heights of Sion,
all radiant over the Eternal's bounty,
yearlings of sheep and cattle,
corn, oil, and wine;
for them life shall be like a watered garden,
no longer shall they pine.
The girls shall delight in dancing,
young men and old shall be merry;
I will change their grief to gladness,
consoling, cheering them after their sorrow;

I will heap rich food on their priests,
and satisfy my people with my bounty."

. . . "In this place that you call desolate, stripped of men and cattle, in the townships of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that lie desolate, stripped of men and cattle, the sound of mirth and gladness shall again be heard, the voice of bridegroom and bride, the voice of those who bring their thank-offerings into the Eternal's temple, singing,

'Give thanks to the Lord of hosts,
for the Eternal is good,
for his kindness never fails.' "

Jeremiah 31:10-14; 33:10, 11

Similar passages appear in the later chapters of Isaiah written by the great prophet of the Exile. Many of his people are still exiles in Babylon, but the long captivity is about to end, and the seer envisions a glorious future. Not only does he predict that the Hebrew people will be re-established in their own land, but what is far more important, he sees them becoming the instrument of God's purposes for the world, passing on to other nations the spiritual truths which they have learned through suffering as well as through inspiration.

Why do you complain, O Jacob,
why do you cry, O Israel,
"My fate the Eternal never notices,
my rights are unregarded by my God"?
Come now! Do you not understand,
have you not heard,
that the Eternal is an everlasting God,
the maker of the world from end to end?
He never faints, never is weary,
his insight is unsearchable;
into the weary he puts power,
and adds new strength to the weak.

Here is the message of the Eternal, the true God,
 who spread and stretched the heavens,
 who made the earth and all it bears,
 who gives breath to its people
 and life to those who walk on it:
 "I the Eternal have called you of set purpose,
 I have taken you by the hand,
 I have formed you for the rescuing of my people,
 for a light to nations,
 to open eyes that are blind,
 to free captives from their bondage,
 darkened lives from prison."

Isaiah 40:27-29; 42:5-7

"I am God and there is none like me,
 I who foretell the end from the beginning,
 and from of old what is to be,
 saying, 'My purpose shall stand,
 I carry out whate'er I choose,'
 summoning a bird of prey from the east,
 a man for my purpose from a land afar;
 I have said it, I will do it,
 I will carry out my plan.
 Listen, ye who are downcast,
 who feel far from any triumph.
 I bring my triumph near, right near,
 my victory is hastening; . . ."

Isaiah 46:9-13

Listen to me, shores afar,
 distant races, hearken!
 The Eternal called me from my birth,
 singled me out from my mother's lap.
 He put a sharp edge on my words,
 and covered me safe with his hand;
 he made me a polished arrow,

and stored me in his quiver,
telling me, "You are my servant Israel,
by whom I will gain honour."

So I gained honour in the Eternal's eyes,
and my God was my strength.

I thought I had been labouring in vain,
spending my strength for nothing;

"But surely," said I, "the Eternal will do me justice,
my God will see to my reward."

And the Eternal . . . now says, "'Tis too slight a service
to set the clans of Jacob up again,
and restore Israel's survivors;

I now appoint you to bring light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach the world's end."

Isaiah 49:16

Also from the Book of Isaiah comes another prediction expressing supreme confidence that God will give Israel a great leader, descended from the line of King David, who will be endowed with wisdom and a high sense of justice. This prophecy was destined to be fulfilled in the coming of Jesus. Mankind has yet to achieve the full understanding and acceptance of his message that will some day usher in the age of peace.

From the stump of Jesse a shoot shall rise,
and a scion from his roots shall flourish;
on him shall rest the spirit of the Eternal,
the spirit of wisdom and insight,
the spirit of counsel and strength,
the spirit that knows and reverences the Eternal.
He will not judge by appearances,
nor decide by hearsay,
but act with justice to the helpless
and decide fairly for the humble;

he will strike down the ruthless with his verdicts,
and slay the unjust with his sentences.

Justice shall gird him up for action,
he shall be belted with trustworthiness.

None shall injure, none shall kill,
anywhere on my sacred hill;
for the land shall be as full of the knowledge of the Eternal
as the ocean-bed is full of water.

Isaiah 11:1-5, 9

When your own individual life is filled with disappointment or tragedy and you are tempted to complain that the universe is without light or hope, you need to climb with the prophets to the high pinnacle of faith where you can take a long look beyond the mountainous obstacles that block the way. It will not be as easy as climbing a peak in the Sierras. You will stumble and be ready to turn back many times before you reach the top. Moral and intellectual courage is far more difficult than physical daring. But once you gain the summit, you will join a heroic company, gifted with an understanding and breadth of vision not achieved by those who have never tried to climb.

We live in a disturbing period of turmoil and widespread conflict among the peoples of the world, of dishonesty and graft in high places of government, of cheating and petty thievery within schools and colleges, of broken homes and neglected children, of increasing unconcern for spiritual values. In days like ours there is crucial need for such faith in the future as we find expressed in the final chapters of the Book of Isaiah. This unknown poet-prophet, living almost 2,500 years ago, foresaw not only the lengthening of the human life span to a hundred years but the creation of a happier, more prosperous world without war or bloodshed. If we were to predict what the world would be like in 4,500 A.D.,

would our prophecies reflect as much faith in the presence and purposes of God upon this earth?

He who prays for blessing in the land,
now invokes the faithful God;
he who takes an oath within the land
now swears by the faithful God.

For I ignore the troubles of the past,
I shut mine eyes to them;

lo, I create new heavens
and a new earth!

The past shall be forgotten,
and never come to mind;
men shall rejoice for ever

in what I now create;
Jerusalem I create to be a joy,
her people a delight.

Over Jerusalem will I rejoice,
I will exult in my people.

No sound of tears, no voice of crying,
shall ever be heard in her;
no babe shall die there any more
in infancy,

nor any old man who has not lived out
his years of life;

he who dies youngest lives a hundred years;
anyone dying under a hundred years

must be accursed by God.

They shall build houses and inhabit them,

they shall plant vineyards and enjoy the fruit;
the homes they build, others shall not inhabit,

what they plant, other men shall not enjoy.

My people shall live long, as lives a tree,

long shall my chosen folk enjoy their earnings;
they shall not work in vain,

nor rear their children to die suddenly,
for they are a race whom the Eternal blesses,
and with them shall their children live.

Ere ever they call to me, I answer,
and while they speak I hear.

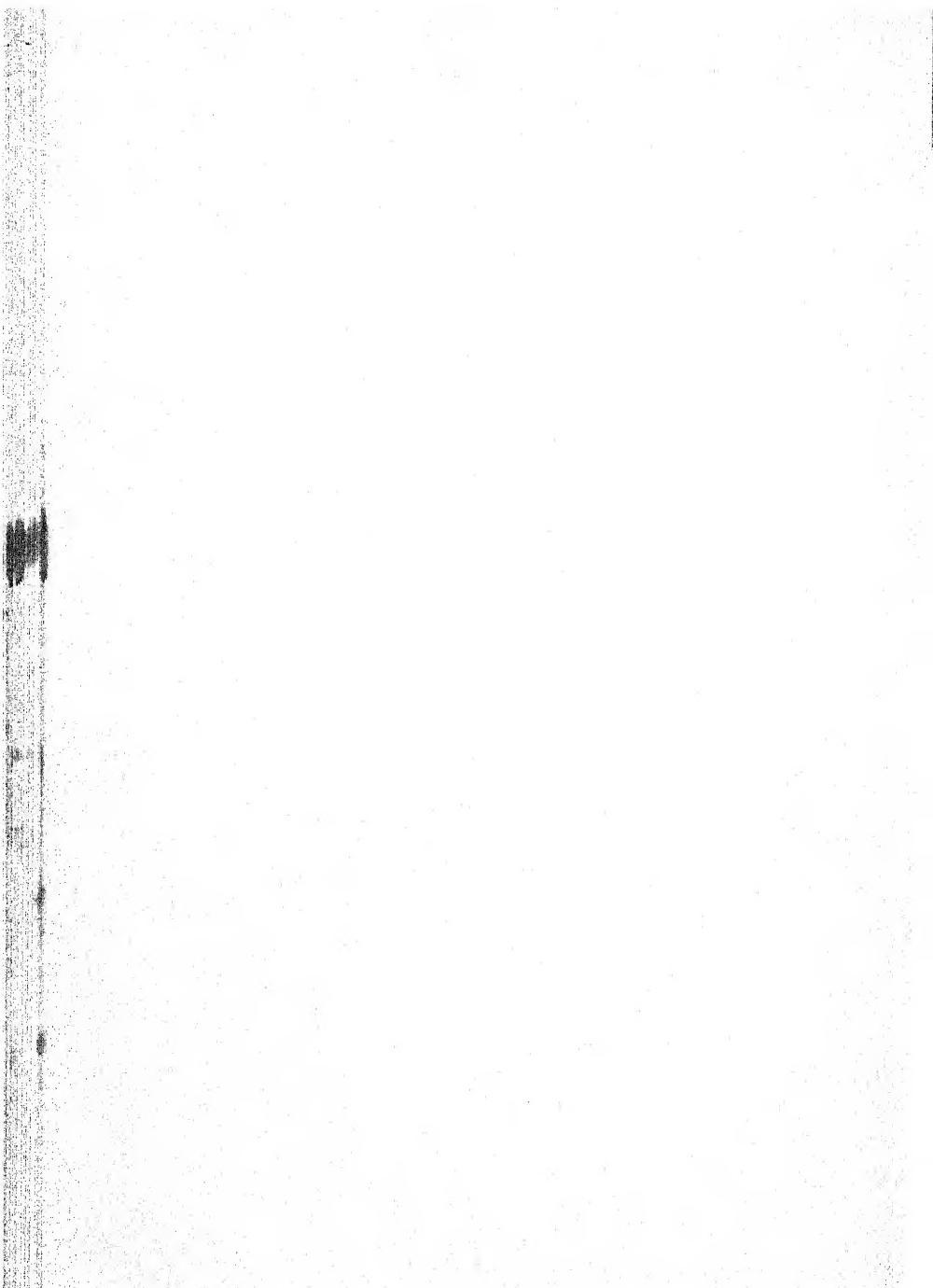
Wolves and lambs shall browse together,
lions shall eat straw like oxen;
none shall injure, none shall kill,
says the Eternal, on my sacred hill.

Isaiah 65:16-25



SECTION THREE

The Ideas of Jesus





CHAPTER 17

Jesus of Nazareth

BY FAR the most important event in the long record of human history occurred nearly two thousand years ago. It was not an invasion, or a scientific discovery, or a decisive battle, or a declaration of independence, or a national election. It was the birth of a child named Jesus in the little town of Bethlehem. For this child was destined to have greater influence on human life than any other person who ever lived.

He did not achieve fame by any of the usual methods. He won no military victories, carved no statues, painted no pictures, wrote no books, composed no symphonies, he was never elected to high political office. He made no scientific discoveries and left behind no inventions. He devised no code of law or system of philosophy. He organized no large industry and amassed no vast fortune.

On the contrary, he spent most of his short life working as a carpenter in a village called Nazareth. Then for a year or two he traveled on foot up and down the hills of Palestine with a handful of friends, talking to people about wonderful new ideas that could transform the world if enough people would accept them. He had a few moments of popularity. Then he was arrested as a troublemaker and condemned to death as a criminal. By all ordinary standards his life must be judged an utter failure.

Yet as the centuries pass, the wisest men of every age continue to stand in humble reverence before the figure of

Jesus. Because he was truly the Son of God in mind and character, he not only inspires men and women with a supreme revelation of the nature of God, but he gives them a new vision of what human beings can become.

Why does Jesus still tower above all others as the loftiest peak in the long range of human personality? The answer lies in the wisdom and power of his ideas, ideas that are as true today as they were when he proclaimed them nineteen hundred years ago. Humanity has a long steep climb ahead before it will catch up with him, its greatest Leader.

Today the majority of those who call themselves Christian do not grasp the full meaning of his message. Few try seriously to put his ideas into practice. Jesus talked about good will among men, but the bitter struggle for power between individuals and groups goes on steadily, and after two World Wars, nations are mobilizing for a still grimmer conflict. Jesus affirmed the value of human personality, yet at least half of the people on earth still live in abject fear under new forms of oppression.

Jesus extolled riches of character, but most people are far more concerned about material things. So-called Christian nations spend far more for automobiles than for churches and schools that contribute to the character of their children. Jesus made it clear that joy was to be found in unselfish service; still multitudes spend their lives in self-centered activity and fret about their frustrations.

Jesus gave men the clue to abundant life through faith in God. Most Christians, however, are paralyzed by fears, filled with doubts, and haunted by feelings of guilt. Jesus pointed out inexhaustible sources of spiritual power in fulfilling the purposes of God. Our minds are so impressed by the destructive force of atomic energy and hydrogen bombs that we fail to consider how God wishes such power to be used.

You wonder why, in the long centuries since he lived,

more people have not accepted the teachings of Jesus. Why have individuals and nations gone on repeating the failures of other methods and made so little attempt to adopt wholeheartedly his pattern of thought and action?

The answer is not, as some cynical people would say, that human nature is fundamentally bad and prefers to go on making mistakes rather than to embark on a nobler way of life. The explanation lies in the confusion and misunderstanding that has obscured the life of Jesus and his message. The great majority of human kind have not had a fair chance to know him and to understand clearly the full impact of what he said and did.

Much of this confusion is due to the unfortunate fact that the record of Jesus' life is woefully inadequate, even though we know more about him than about any other in antiquity. Nothing was written about him during his lifetime. Then after his crucifixion years went by, at least twenty, perhaps thirty, before any written collection of the sayings of Jesus was assembled. During these years stories about him were undoubtedly repeated, told and retold by his disciples to explain their love for him and their faith in his message. What he had said on various occasions and about various subjects was remembered and quoted until a body of tradition grew up and became common knowledge among the first Christians, even among those who, like Paul, had not known him personally. The first of the four Gospels, the Book of Mark, was actually written about 70 A.D.; Luke's and Matthew's accounts followed twenty years later, and finally the Book of John appeared a full century after his birth.

It was inevitable, with the passing of time, that inaccuracies should develop as to details, that various happenings should be elaborated and perhaps exaggerated, and that the story of Jesus, remarkable and vivid as it was, should be presented against the background of older traditions and other patterns of thought. For example, we have Jesus presented as the grand

climax in the Jewish tradition of Temple sacrifices, as the promised Messiah who through voluntary suffering and death, became the "Lamb of God" atoning for all the sins of the world back to Adam. In accordance with this interpretation some authorities have claimed that it was necessary only to accept him as "Saviour" and have faith to be "saved" and guaranteed a place in heaven.

His career fell under the influence of Greek mythology and philosophy, and just as Jupiter and Apollo were supposed to have come to earth in human form, Jesus is represented as of divine origin, altogether different from human beings, possessing a perfection impossible for men to achieve. Thus, from the days of the apostles, the real significance of the life of Jesus has been concealed and shrouded in mystery by theological and philosophical interpretations. While men argued, the world lost sight of the great truths which Jesus taught. Worshippers have continued to bow their heads before his cross as a beautiful symbol without trying to put his ideas into practice, or knowing what they were.

Moreover, as centuries have passed, false impressions as to his character and his message have grown up and spread like thick fog to obscure the true outlines of his greatness. He has been pictured as "a Man of Sorrows" who denied himself all earthly pleasures and had little or nothing to do with normal human experience; to be like him, one must withdraw from the world and live apart. The record, sketchy as it is, offers abundant evidence of his enjoyment of good fellowship, of his loyalty to friends, of his warm affection for children, of his appreciation for the beauties of nature, of his radiant enthusiasm for his work, of his boundless faith in the love of God and in the possibilities of mankind.

Again, he has been pictured as a pale weakling. Yet the facts prove that he was a man of action, with great physical strength as well as high moral courage. He climbed mountains and worked with his hands. He commanded the admira-

tion of rugged fishermen and hard-bitten Roman soldiers. He alarmed the religious authorities by his vigorous attack on the evils of his day. Finally he endured intense suffering of body and mind with quiet fortitude.

Perhaps most damaging of all such falsifications has been the representation of Jesus as a visionary, a beautiful dreamer, a vague idealist with theories that sound attractive but are really completely impractical. As a matter of historic fact, whenever any of his ideas have been tried, even in a limited and imperfect way, they have proved highly successful and have opened the way to tremendous advances. His faith in human nature and respect for personality has afforded the basis for democratic government with its ideals of individual freedom and equality of opportunity. His concern for the sick and suffering has been the inspiration for hospitals, the gradual victory over disease, and medical care for rich and poor alike. It is the false notions to which men and nations cling that are being proved impractical and wasteful, such as the waging of war with its staggering costs and untold suffering.

Because of all the misunderstanding that has surrounded the figure of Jesus, millions of people today are like the multitudes who followed him in Galilee, hoping to see some miracle performed but failing to understand his message, worshipping him as "Lord" or "Master" without trying to follow his example, believing in him as a mysterious "Saviour" but unwilling or unable to translate his ideas into action.

Yet these ideas stand out clear and unmistakable in the four Gospels. Regardless of theological dogma or philosophical quibbles, here are explicit principles which every man and woman can put into execution. Here are guarantees of spiritual power and moral courage. Here are assurances of joy and hope extending far into the future. To understand and adopt these ideas is, therefore, the greatest challenge for any generation, particularly when humanity stands between the

limitless possibilities of abundant life and the appalling destruction of war in the atomic age.

Such a challenge is not for the faint-hearted. It must be taken up by those with courage and faith to rediscover the most amazing person who ever lived, and eager to set out on the high adventure of great living.

If you would understand Jesus, think of him as the greatest Leader of history: strong, brilliant, powerful, magnetic, inspiring. Think of him as possessing the secrets of happiness for which people are constantly searching and which they are continually missing. Think of him as a virile and vibrant person, accepting persecution with a generous spirit, facing defeat with confident assurance of final victory and even forgiving those who killed him. Think of him as inspired by boundless faith in God as the Father of mankind, and by the most glorious vision that has ever entered the human mind of the possibilities of life on earth.

Centuries have passed, and Jesus is still unsurpassed. His insights and convictions offer the answers to our most pressing problems. Jesus did not ask men to believe and be saved for some future life. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, he urged them to change their outworn patterns of thought and action, so that they would become sons of the living God here and now. He invited them to establish the reign of the God of love on earth.

The most urgent need of the world today is to renounce the substitutions of ritual and theological argument, and to rediscover the teachings of Jesus. Only by the genuine acceptance of love and cooperation can human beings attain their high destiny. Human effort has been primarily directed toward the use of physical force in one form or another as a means of settling disputes and resolving differences. The hydrogen bomb is the grand climax to date in this effort. This device is now regarded as the weapon which will prevent attack and end all wars.

But the use of force will not guarantee a peaceful world. All conflicts grow out of clashes in ideas. The only way to overcome a false idea is by demonstrating the truth and power of a better idea. If we are in earnest about desiring peace at home and abroad, we will learn without delay the long-neglected message of the man from Nazareth.

Only by ridding the world of conflict and war can people be set free from the tensions which are gradually exhausting the resources of men and nations. The way will then be open to employ all human energies and ingenuity for constructive purposes: for the feeding of the hungry, for the care of the sick, for the raising of living standards in every nation, for the banishing of fear and hatred, for the spread of knowledge, for laughter and the enjoyment of beauty, for the building of human character. This is not an impossible dream. According to Jesus and the great prophets, this is the creation of the kingdom of heaven on earth, in accordance with the purposes of God. Our age has within its grasp the opportunity to remake the world.



CHAPTER 18

A New Value on Human Life

DID you ever pause to consider how much you are worth as an individual? On one hand we know that life is something we cannot buy; on the other, life seems cheap—the world is full of people, millions of them! We are usually willing to grant that those who live in our own town or country are important or valuable, but what about the rest of the earth's billions? When there are shortages of jobs or food, there appears to be an excess of people. It is even said that recurring wars are necessary so that surplus populations will be eliminated, leaving more room and more food for the survivors.

The answer you decide upon for this vital question affects not only your attitude toward others but also the value you place on your own life.

What then is a human being worth? If you ask a chemist, he may tell you that the chemicals which make up the human body are worth about four dollars and a half. If you are satisfied that the tale of life can be told in terms of the physical body and its sensations, then you may be satisfied with that estimate.

If you ask an astronomer who has peered through the lens of a modern telescope at flaming suns in the outer edges of our universe, millions of light years away, he is likely to regard the brief life of a man as slightly less important than a shooting star.

If you ask an industrial engineer or a building contractor

or a factory foreman, he will probably reply that a man's worth should be measured in terms of his skill and the amount he can produce with hands or brains.

If you ask a banker, he may say that the value of a man to himself, to his family and to the community is determined by the size of his income and the amount of money he has been able to put in the bank. One man, he will point out, is worth a hundred thousand dollars, or perhaps a million, while another is not worth a nickel.

Let us leave our modern industrial world with its dollar-and-cents values and travel back 2,000 years to the ancient world into which Jesus was born. If you had asked a Roman officer, he would have imperiously waved you aside as being altogether ridiculous: human life had not the slightest value except as it could be made to serve the glory of the Roman Empire. Roman civilization, like that of all ancient empires, was built on slave labor, on conscripted armies, and on the tribute paid by conquered peoples. Because the world was filled with brutality and hatred, conquerors feared rebellion and ruled with an iron hand, while the vanquished despised their rulers and longed for vengeance.

Nor would the answer have been very different from a high official of the Jewish theocracy. He would have replied that his nation was of utmost importance as "the Chosen People" but that only a few individuals of distinction—the members of the high council known as the Sanhedrin—were worthy of special notice by God or man. The populace was expected to submit to the laws laid down by the leaders. As for gentiles and foreigners, they were generally regarded by the Jews as outside the pale, undeserving of the slightest concern. The Jews despised the Samaritans, the Romans, the Greeks as unclean; to speak to them, do business with them, even to walk along the street with them was to risk being polluted or defiled.

Imagine, therefore, the amazement and consternation of

all in authority, whether Romans or Jews, when they heard a radically different evaluation of human life urged by Jesus. He declared God to be the loving Father of all human beings and insisted that each and every man, woman and child is of infinite worth. Imagine also the surprise and joy of plain people, who had known nothing but misery and despair, when they heard words like these:

“Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?

Yet not one of them is forgotten by God.

But the very hairs on your head are all numbered;
fear not, you are worth far more than sparrows.”

Luke 12:6, 7

“Tell me, if a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays, will he not leave the ninety-nine sheep on the hills and go in search of the one that has strayed? And if he happens to find it, I tell you he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that a single one of these little ones should be lost.”

Matthew 18:12-14

“. . . surely life means more than food,
surely the body means more than clothes!

Look at the wild birds;

they sow not, they reap not, they gather nothing in
granaries,

and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not worth more than birds?

Which of you can add an ell to his height by troubling
about it?

And why should you trouble over clothing?

Look how the lilies of the field grow;

they neither toil nor spin,

and yet, I tell you, even Solomon in all his grandeur
was never robed like one of them.

"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field which blooms to-day and is thrown to-morrow into the furnace, will not he much more clothe you? O men, how little you trust him! Do not be troubled, then, and cry, 'What are we to eat?' or 'what are we to drink?' or 'how are we to be clothed?' (pagans make all that their aim in life) for well your heavenly Father knows you need all that. Seek God's Realm and his goodness, and all that will be yours over and above."

Matthew 6:25-33

"Ask and the gift will be yours,
seek and you will find,
knock and the door will open to you;
for everyone who asks receives,
the seeker finds,
the door is opened to anyone who knocks.
Why, which of you, when asked by his son for a loaf,
will hand him a stone?
Or, if he asks a fish, will you hand him a serpent?
Well, if for all your evil you know to give your children
what is good,
how much more will your father in heaven give good
to those who ask him?"

Matthew 7:7-11

It was not physical existence which Jesus considered of great value: it was the inner spirit, the thought and attitudes of the mind, the personality composed of desires and purposes. "Surely life means more than food, surely the body means more than clothes!" He insisted that a human being endowed with a spiritual nature identical with that of the Divine Will cannot be satisfied with an animal's eating and sleeping; he is no mannikin content with wearing clothes, no collector to be delighted in the stuffing of ever-larger store-houses. The true sources of a man's happiness, Jesus knew, lie elsewhere—in the search for truth, in the creation of

beauty, in the service of other people, in the love of family and friends, in loyal devotion to some great cause. This was the true nature of human personality which Jesus discerned like a buried diamond, beneath the despair and oppression of his day.

Here was a new estimate of human life which lifted personality from the bottom of the list and placed it at the top, far above everything else. To Jesus man himself was of infinite value, to be protected, preserved, encouraged to rise to his full capacities, created "in the likeness of God."

Nor was this high value placed on human beings a vague theory, arrived at by philosophical argument. It was fundamental to Jesus' view and set the pattern of his life. His chief interest was in people, wherever he found them, whatever their circumstances—rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, young or old, man or woman, fisherman or scholar, money-lender or beggar, Roman officer or tax-gatherer. He was criticized severely for his choice of friends since he was not careful to associate with the "right people." He had no ambition to become socially popular or politically powerful or financially successful.

His consuming purpose was to free human beings from the forces that were crushing their spirits, injuring their bodies, blinding them to their possibilities. In his denunciations of those who mistreated or exploited their fellow men, he belonged to the high tradition of the prophets—Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah. He knew their words by heart and quoted them time and again.

In the gospel of John we are told that he described himself as a shepherd who is willing to go to any length to protect his sheep from harm. Because each one is precious to him and to be saved at all cost, he was willing to give his own life. He was convinced that people are worth any sacrifice.

"The thief only comes to steal, to slay, and to destroy: I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd; a good shepherd lays down his own life for the sheep. The hired man, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, deserts them when he sees the wolf coming; he runs away, leaving the wolf to tear and scatter them, just because he is a hired man, who has no interest in the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep and my sheep know me (just as the Father knows me and I know the Father), and I lay down my life for the sheep."

John 10:10-15

The world of the twentieth century is far from accepting whole-heartedly this idea of Jesus as to the value of human personality. Here is the root cause of the conflict between the democracies and the dictatorships: crucial disagreement as to whether men and women deserve the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, or whether they should be slaves of the State, surrendering body, mind and soul "for the welfare of the nation." Even in democratic countries there are still glaring instances of injustice and the denial of essential human rights because of various deep-seated prejudices.

With the expanding achievements of modern science we are tempted to consider machines such as electronic digital computers or the mighty cyclotrons which split the atom to be superior to men. Yet a modern scientist has stated that "personality is the great central fact of the universe,"* recognizing, as Jesus did centuries ago, that the human mind is always greater than the fact it discovers or the mechanical system it devises.

* J. Scott Haldane, Mechanism, Life and Personality (E. P. Dutton, 1923), p. 139.

If you accept the attitude of Jesus, you will join the crusade in behalf of human freedom the world over. Share his faith in human nature and you will be concerned that there are still places in the world where unwanted babies are tossed aside, where life is held cheap. Like the physician who fights for the life of any child with all the resources of modern medicine, you will insist upon the right of every boy and girl to a happy home and full opportunity for the growth of character and the development of special talents, regardless of race, color or creed. Across the centuries we can still hear him saying,

"it is not the will of your Father in heaven that a single one of these little ones should be lost."

Matthew 18:14



CHAPTER 19

A New Standard of Right and Wrong

BECAUSE he believed human personality to be of immeasurable value, Jesus gave to the world a new test for conduct and for human relationships. He saw people burdened and confused by complicated legal codes and religious tradition. He saw their leaders involved with petty details of form and ceremony while vital matters of mercy, justice and fair dealing were neglected. He saw that, instead of being a source of strength and inspiration, religion had become a crushing burden for the poor and a self-righteous mask to cover hypocrisy and corruption.

With a brilliance of mind and clarity of insight that surpassed even the great prophets, Jesus swept aside trivial requirements that had nothing to do with character and held up a new standard by which to test not only men's actions but even their motives. He judged each situation not on the basis of legalistic regulations but according to its effect on human personality.

Whatever contributes to human well-being and the development of character, he said, is right and good. Whatever injures any man, woman or child physically, mentally or spiritually is wrong. Therefore, any custom or institution which becomes an obstacle to human growth or progress must be abandoned or destroyed, no matter how widely accepted or how strongly entrenched.

This idea sounds simple enough, yet it proved to be revolutionary, and eventually cost him his life. For it quickly

brought him into sharp conflict with the Pharisees and others in authority. Not only did he brush aside impatiently established ceremonial customs and legal codes that were considered sacred, but he attacked vigorously the evil practices of certain unscrupulous leaders in high places.

Moreover, in all fairness, one must admit that the Pharisees, confronted with this new standard of Jesus, faced a difficult and almost impossible situation, from their point of view. They took very seriously their responsibilities as guardians of sacred traditions. Other national groups had lost their identity and had been swallowed up by their Persian and Greek conquerors, but not the Jews. The Pharisees had seen to that. Even after the Maccabean revolt in the second century B.C., which gave the Jews some measure of political independence, the great traditions of their religion and law might have been lost in the strong tide of Greek culture which swept around Palestine. In fact, many Jews did accept the Greek way of life.

In order to preserve any degree of national existence, therefore, it was necessary for the Pharisees to keep alive all ceremonial laws and to stress with fanatical zeal every custom which made a loyal Jew different from other nationalities: the way he dressed, what he ate, how and where he prayed, how he tithed his goods, how he offered animal sacrifices, how he observed the Sabbath, and so on. Each minute detail became immensely important in the anxious attempt to preserve the national culture and separate the Chosen People from the defiling influence of other nations.

Then Jesus arrived on the scene, interpreting religion, like the prophets, in terms of justice, mercy and love, tossing aside distinctive Jewish customs, accepting as friends unorthodox publicans who failed to obey ceremonial laws, and even recommending kindness to Samaritans and Gentiles as of equal merit with an orthodox Jew! The Pharisees were appalled and thoroughly frightened. They saw the work of years undone and thrown away by a young upstart who had won

the ear of the heedless, ignorant masses. When finally he challenged their own sincerity and methods, they saw their prestige crumbling. They could not allow him to continue.

In condemning him and trying to destroy his ideas, they believed that they were doing the will of God. Countless have been the cruelties committed in the name of religion, and they will continue to be committed as long as men are blind to human needs and defend as sacred man-made rules or institutions which no longer contribute to the development of human personality.

The first concern of Jesus was always human need. For example, one Sunday when his disciples were hungry, they picked corn, thereby breaking the Hebrew law which prohibited any kind of work on the Sabbath. When the Pharisees accused him of committing a crime, Jesus reminded them that Hosea and the other great prophets had proclaimed God's desire for kindness and mercy rather than for empty ritual and animal sacrifices.

At that time Jesus walked one sabbath through the corn-fields, and as his disciples were hungry, they started to pull some ears of corn and eat them. When the Pharisees noticed it, they said to him, "Look at your disciples, they are doing what is not allowed on the sabbath!"

He replied, "Have you not read what David did when he and his men were hungry, how he went into the house of God, and there they ate the loaves of the Presence which neither he nor his men were allowed to eat, but only the priests? Have you not read in the Law that the priests in the temple are not guilty when they desecrate the sabbath? I tell you, One is here who is greater than the temple. Besides, if you had known what this meant, I care for mercy, not for sacrifice, you would not have condemned men who are not guilty."

"The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath:
so that the Son of man is Lord even over the sabbath."

Mark 2:28

Strict observance of the Sabbath required that no help be given the sick or the lame unless it was a matter of life and death. But Jesus was quick to point out that concern for human suffering should not be limited to weekdays.

Another sabbath, he happened to go into the synagogue and teach. Now a man was there who had his right hand withered, and the scribes and Pharisees watched to see if he would heal on the sabbath, so as to discover some charge against him. He knew what was in their minds; so he told the man with the withered hand, "Rise and stand forward." He rose and stood before them.

Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it right on the sabbath to help or to hurt, to save life or to kill?" And glancing round at them all in anger, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was quite restored. This filled them with fury, and they discussed what they could do to Jesus.

Luke 6:6-11

On another occasion the Pharisees found fault with Jesus and his disciples because they did not wash their hands before eating. According to Jewish custom, this was a serious offense; the washing of hands and feet was an important ritual, as well as the scrubbing of copper pots and kettles within the household and the careful measuring out of every article of food even to tiny grains of spice, so that one-tenth could be set aside as a Temple offering. Again Jesus rebuked their emphasis on petty detail. Instead he turned the search-

light upon inner motives and attitudes of mind which he considered a far truer standard of good and evil. The final test of character, he insisted, is not the cleanliness of one's hands but the treatment of other people, the success or failure of one's human relationships.

Then Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? They do not wash their hands when they take their food."

He replied, "And why do you transgress the command of God with your traditions? God enjoined, Honour your father and mother, and, He who curses his father or mother is to suffer death. But you say, whoever tells his father or mother, 'This money might have been at your service but it is dedicated to God,' need not honour his father or mother. So you have repealed the law of God to suit your own tradition. Yes, you hypocrites, it was indeed of you that Isaiah prophesied when he said,

This people honours me with their lips,
but their heart is far away from me:
vain is their worship of me,
for the doctrines they teach are but human precepts."

Whereupon he called the crowd and said to them, "Listen, understand this:

it is not what enters a man's mouth that defiles him;
what defiles a man is what comes out of his mouth."

"For out of the heart come evil designs, murder, adultery, sexual vice, stealing, false witness, and slander. That is what defiles a man; a man is not defiled by eating with hands unwashed!"

Matthew 15:1-11, 19, 20

Here then was an ethical standard far higher than any legal code set down before or since. It is not enough, said Jesus, not to break the law. He knew that character grows from within, as the result of positive desires and right purposes. Wrong attitudes, meanness of spirit, evil designs, even though unexpressed, are damaging to character. With an understanding of personality far in advance of his time and ours, he saw that motives are more important than actions: that people may do the right things for the wrong reasons, or they may do wrong things for the right reasons. He was always careful, therefore, to look beyond the action to the thought which prompted it.

"Never imagine I have come to destroy the Law or the prophets; I have not come to destroy but to fulfil.

"For I tell you, unless your goodness excels that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the Realm of heaven.

You have heard how the men of old were told 'Murder not:

whoever murders shall come up for sentence,
whoever maligns his brother shall come before the San-
hedrin,
whoever curses his brother shall go to the fire of Ge-
henna.'

But I tell you, whoever is angry with his brother without cause will be sentenced by God. So if you remember, even when offering your gift at the altar, that your brother has any grievance against you, leave your gift at the very altar and go away; first be reconciled to your brother, then come back and offer your gift."

Matthew 5:17, 20-24

"No sound tree bears rotten fruit,
nor again does a rotten tree bear sound fruit:

each tree is known by its fruit.
 Figs are not gathered from thorns,
 and grapes are not plucked from a bramble-bush.
 The good man produces good from the good stored in
 his heart,
 and the evil man evil from his evil:
 for a man's mouth utters what his heart is full of."

Luke 6:43-45

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Jesus has often been pictured as a person who moved through life with undisturbed calm and inexhaustible patience, but this is far from the truth. His anger and indignation were aroused more than once, and always for the same reason: whenever he saw human beings mistreated or misled. Time and again he saw the minds of children being poisoned or warped by fears, hatreds, prejudices and false patterns of thought. To destroy the spontaneous enthusiasms and generous impulses of youth was to him the most serious crime of all.

At that hour the disciples came and asked Jesus, "Who is greatest in the Realm of heaven?" So he called a child, set it among them, and said, "I tell you truly, unless you turn and become like children, you will never get into the Realm of heaven at all. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the Realm of heaven; and whoever receives a little child like this for my sake, receives me.

"But whoever is a hindrance to one of these little ones who believe in me, better for him to have a great millstone hung round his neck and be sunk in the deep sea. (Woe to the world for hindrances! Hindrances have to come, but—woe to the man by whom the hindrance does come!)

If your hand or your foot is a hindrance to you, cut it off
 and throw it away;

better be maimed or crippled and get into Life, than keep both feet or hands and be thrown into the everlasting fire.

If your eye is a hindrance to you, tear it out and throw it away;
better get into Life with one eye,
than keep your two eyes and be thrown into the fire of Gehenna."

Matthew 18:1-9

If Jesus walked the earth today, he would no doubt be very much interested in all the amazing developments which have taken place since he walked the hills of Galilee. But he would apply the same test that he applied two thousand years ago. To him human personality, the spirit within, is still the most precious substance on earth. That which protects it, serves its needs, and helps it to expand to its full possibilities, he would say, is good. That which injures it, warping the mind, blinding the vision of young or old and preventing men and women from becoming true children of God, such things or people or institutions, no matter how impressive or how valuable they may seem, are wrong.

He would undoubtedly look at our movies, listen to our radios and watch our television shows, and he would ask what effect they have on mind and character. Do they expand our interest in other people or clutter our thoughts with false impressions? Do they increase our faith in people or give us a distorted picture of human life?

He would look at our machines, at our streamlined trains and automobiles, at our great industries and multitudes of products that pour out day after day, and he would ask whether they serve human needs and release the energies of men and women for richer, fuller enjoyment of life, for the creation of beauty, for lives of service and devotion to high purposes; or whether they increase nerve-wracking tensions and

add to the burdens of worry and concern which plague the mind and exhaust the energies of young and old.

He would look at our high-speed airplanes and he would ask whether they mean faster communication and therefore a greater amount of understanding and good will among the peoples of the earth, or whether they have served to spread fear, suspicion and hatred as possible instruments of war and speedy carriers of hydrogen bombs. He would look at the governments of nations, and he would want to know whether their policies at home and abroad are determined by true concern for the welfare of their people or were dictated by selfish nationalism and greed for power.

Most of all perhaps, he would want to visit homes and schools and churches. He would not judge them by the design of their architecture. He would be far more interested in seeing what is happening to personality even of the littlest child, whether the emphasis is on rigid rules and traditions or on the building of character, on the encouragement of right attitudes and better understanding in all human relationships.

We live in an age which places great emphasis on physical strength and agility, on championship teams and the breaking of world records. What the human race sorely needs today, more than specimens of physical strength and muscular coordination are tough-minded young men and women with the vision and courage to apply to modern institutions the standard of right and wrong which Jesus gave to the world centuries ago. Such leaders would undoubtedly cause a revolution in human affairs but they would help save mankind from self-destruction and open up new possibilities for the fuller development of human personality.



CHAPTER 20

A New Attitude Called Love

JESUS' greatest challenge to mankind was the new commandment to "love one another." It must have sounded strange and even ridiculous amid the cruelties and intense hatreds of that ancient world. Yet with wisdom far in advance of his time Jesus offered this new basis for human relationships.

Two thousand years later we are still lagging far behind this great leader who had the brilliant insight that the only force powerful enough to banish hate and restrain fear is the attitude of love. Today it still seems absurdly impractical to the vast majority of men and nations who continue to put their faith in the use of military might.

A great obstacle to the recognition of the power of love has been a serious misunderstanding of its meaning. People generally think of love in terms of romance, or of intimate affection among members of a family or close friends. Thus it appears impossible to love everybody in the world. We have contacts with people whom we honestly dislike; surely we are not expected to love them as we love our relatives and friends. So we are quick to discard the idea of universal love as sentimental nonsense.

This, however, is not what Jesus meant when he used the term. Like us, he had his special friends. Like us, he knew people whose behavior he disliked intensely, and he did not hesitate to tell them so. Yet he expressed toward all men, even toward the Pharisees who plotted his death, an atti-

tude of inexhaustible, undiscourageable good will and a ready willingness to understand and forgive.

On one occasion he explained what love for one's neighbor means by telling the story of the Good Samaritan. The lawyer who questioned him thought of love only in a narrow sense, and wanted an excuse for his own self-centered hostility toward others.

Now a jurist got up to tempt him. "Teacher," he said, "what am I to do to inherit life eternal?"

He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He replied, "You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole strength, and with your whole mind. Also your neighbour as yourself." "A right answer!" said Jesus; "do that and you will live."

Anxious to make an excuse for himself, however, he said to Jesus, "But who is my neighbour?" Jesus rejoined, "A man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among robbers, who stripped and belaboured him and then went off, leaving him half-dead. Now it so chanced that a priest was going down the same road, but on seeing him he went past on the opposite side. So did a Levite who came to the spot; he looked at him but passed on the opposite side.

"However, a Samaritan traveller came to where he was, and felt pity when he saw him; he went to him, bound his wounds up, pouring oil and wine into them, mounted him on his own steed, took him to an inn, and attended to him. Next morning he took out a couple of shillings and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Attend to him, and if you are put to any extra expense, I will refund you on my way back.' Which of these three men, in your opinion, proved a neighbour to the man who fell among robbers?"

He said, "The man who took pity on him." Jesus said to him, "Then go and do the same."

Luke 10:25-37

There was nothing sentimental or romantic in this situation. A fellow man desperately needed help. The urgent need was carefully ignored by those who considered themselves too busy or too important to become involved. They did not know the victim, so he meant nothing to them personally.

Here then is a significant clue as to what Jesus meant by the term love: good will that extends to every human being in need, regardless of nationality, color, or creed; the willingness to reach out a helping hand without thought of cost to oneself and without looking for repayment.

Jesus was quick to point out that favors done or friendly acts performed for selfish purposes are not sincere expressions of love, no matter how generous they may appear. He knew that kindness with an ulterior motive, with the hope of something in return, is a poor substitute for genuine good will. Such a calculating attitude indicates a strategy to use others for our own ends, to make tools of them, or to gain control over them. That is why Jesus recommended secrecy in giving of gifts.

"Take care not to practice your charity before men in order to be noticed; otherwise you get no reward from your Father in heaven. No,

When you give alms,

make no flourish of trumpets like the hypocrites in the synagogues and the streets,
so as to win applause from men;

I tell you truly, they do get their reward.

When you give alms,

never let your left hand show what your right hand is doing,

so as to keep your alms secret;
then your Father who sees what is secret will reward
you openly."

Matthew 6:1-4

... "When you give a dinner or supper, do not ask your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your rich neighbours, in case they invite you back again and you get repaid. No, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind. Then you will be blessed; for as they have no means of repaying you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Luke 14:12-14

Important as this interpretation of love is, Jesus went still further when he insisted upon inexhaustible patience and readiness to forgive. He saw that men delight to sit in judgment, sternly condemning every mistake, seemingly eager to mete out punishment without mercy or attempt to understand; that men are prone to criticize in ignorance of the background or circumstances which result in human error. With insight that is a marvel of intelligence, Jesus urged sympathetic understanding, quick forgiveness, and the warm assurance of faith which inspires one to forget the past and live up to the best that is within them.

When he himself was criticized for being a friend to disreputable people, he told the story of a boy who made so many mistakes that most people would have considered him worthless and a disgrace to his family. Yet the father's attitude was one of affectionate welcome and joy that his son had returned home. Instead of condemnation and blame, his only thought was to restore the boy to his rightful place in the household, surround him with love, and express full confidence that he could measure up to the proud expectations of a father.

. . . "There was a man who had two sons, and the younger said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me.' So he divided his means among them.

"Not many days later, the younger son sold off everything and went abroad to a distant land, where he squandered his means in loose living. After he had spent his all, a severe famine set in throughout that land, and he began to feel in want; so he went and attached himself to a citizen of that land, who sent him to his fields to feed swine. And he was fain to fill his belly with the pods the swine were eating; no one gave him anything.

"But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many hired men of my father have more than enough to eat, and here am I, perishing of hunger! I will be up and off to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I don't deserve to be called your son any more; only make me like one of your hired men."'" So he got up and went off to his father. But when he was still far away, his father saw him and felt pity for him and ran to fall upon his neck and kiss him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I don't deserve to be called your son any more.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him, give him a ring for his hand and sandals for his feet, and bring the fatted calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for my son here was dead and he has come to life; he was lost and he is found.'"

Luke 15:11-24

In the rest of the story we see the vivid contrast between the generosity of the great-hearted father and the bitter, ill-tempered complaint of the self-righteous, jealous brother.

"Now his elder son was out in the field, and as he came near the house he heard music and dancing; so, summoning

one of the servants, he asked what this meant. The servant told him, 'Your brother has arrived, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' This angered him, and he would not go in. His father came out and tried to appease him; but he replied, 'Look at all the years I have been serving you! I never neglected any of your orders, and yet you have never given me so much as a kid, to let me make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours arrives, after wasting your means with harlots, you kill the fatted calf for him!'

"The father said to him, 'My son, you and I are always together; all I have is yours. We could not but make merry and rejoice, for your brother here was dead and he has come to life again, he was lost but he is found.'"

Luke 15:25-32

"Judge not, that you may not be judged yourselves;
for as you judge so you will be judged,
and the measure you deal out to others will be dealt
out to yourselves.

"Why note the splinter in your brother's eye, and fail to see the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take out the splinter from your eye,' when there lies the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite! take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see properly how to take the splinter out of your brother's eye."

Matthew 7:1-5

When one of his disciples asked him how many times one should forgive an injury, Jesus urged boundless patience, pointing out that God as a loving Father expects us to be as willing to forgive as He is.

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often is my brother to sin against me and be forgiven? Up to seven times?"

Jesus said to him, "Seven times? I say, seventy times seven! That is why the Realm of heaven may be compared to a king who resolved to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the settlement, a debtor was brought in who owed him three million pounds; as he was unable to pay, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all he had, in payment of the sum. So the servant fell down and prayed him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you it all.' And out of pity for that servant, his master released him and discharged his debt.

"But as that servant went away, he met one of his fellow-servants who owed him twenty pounds, and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay your debt!' So his fellow-servant fell down and implored him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; he went and had him thrown into prison, till he should pay the debt.

"Now when his fellow-servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and explained to their master all that had happened. Then his master summoned him and said, 'You scoundrel of a servant! I discharged all that debt for you, because you implored me. Ought you not to have had mercy on your fellow-servant, as I had on you?' And in hot anger his master handed him over to the torturers, till he should pay him all the debt. My heavenly Father will do the same to you, unless you each forgive your brother from the heart."

Matthew 18:21-35

To those in authority who were resolved to enforce the strict letter of the law this attitude must have seemed like a dangerous breakdown of discipline. They were still more confounded when Jesus urged the forgiveness of one's enemies. Was it possible for a Jew to forgive the Roman over-

lords? Is it possible today, we may ask, to forgive the atrocities of a dictator?

Yet Jesus recommended good will even when it hurts, patience that has no end or measure, faith that cannot be discouraged. It takes wisdom to realize that the one who seeks to injure others is himself desperately in need of help. Therefore, Jesus advised, pity your enemy, try to discover why he acts the way he does, and overcome his hostility with the power of your own good will.

The Sermon on the Mount is to be read not only as good religion but as valid psychology as well. Far from being impractical and unrealistic, its principles have proved to be the sole practical means to achieve healthy, happy, satisfactory relationships with one's fellow men.

"You have heard the saying, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you, you are not to resist an injury:

whoever strikes you on the right cheek,

turn the other to him as well;

whoever wants to sue you for your shirt,

let him have your coat as well;

whoever forces you to go one mile,

go two miles with him;

give to the man who begs from you,

and turn not away from him who wants to borrow.

You have heard the saying, 'You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven:

he makes his sun rise on the evil and the good,

and sends rain on the just and the unjust,

For if you love only those who love you, what reward

do you get for that?

do not the very taxgatherers do as much?

and if you only salute your friends, what is special about that?

do not the very pagans do as much?"

Matthew 5:38-47

"As you would like men to do to you,
so do to them.

"If you help only those who help you, what merit is that to you?

Why, even sinful men do that.

If you only lend to those from whom you hope to get something, what credit is that to you?

Even sinful men lend to one another, so as to get a fair return.

No, you must love your enemies and help them, you must lend to them without expecting any return;

then you will have a rich reward,
you will be sons of the Most High—

for he is kind even to the ungrateful and the evil.
Be merciful,

as your Father is merciful.

Also, judge not, and you will not be judged yourselves; condemn not, and you will not be condemned:

pardon, and you will be pardoned yourselves:
give, and you will have ample measure given you—

they will pour into your lap measure pressed down,
shaken together, and running over;

for the measure you deal out to others will be dealt back to yourselves."

Luke 6:31, 33-38

Such advice may sound sentimental and weak. Generosity and forgiveness are commonly regarded as signs of weakness. To be lenient and gentle, many feel, is to risk losing control of the situation. We have been brought up to believe that

strength is demonstrated when men and nations refuse to take insults, when they show anger and strike back, when they employ daring measures to defend their rights. Popular heroes are likely to be quick-tempered men of action who know how to fight it out with sword or fists, strike and lock-out, jet plane or bomber.

Yet surprising as it may seem, modern psychologists are recognizing the urgent need for positive good will in all interpersonal relationships. The more they learn about the emotional nature of man, the more they emphasize the supreme importance of the attitude of love which Jesus taught centuries ago. They warn that fear and hate are dangerous poisons which infect the mind, causing not only mental illness but various physical ailments, such as skin diseases, stomach ulcers and heart failure. Just as a physician looks beyond symptoms to discover the cause of illness, so the psychologist tries to discover the hidden reasons for human problems and mistakes. The person who is mentally or emotionally ill does not need discipline or punishment but sympathetic help in freeing himself from his fears, guilty feelings or sense of failure, so that his faith in himself and in others can be restored.

Jesus had the insight to see what the psychologists are discovering now as a result of extensive analysis in clinics and laboratories: the essential need of every human being, young and old, to be loved, to feel wanted, to be assured that he is understood and accepted as a unique and individual member of the human race.

When a child is denied genuine affection within the home, his emotional health is seriously affected. His mind becomes filled with fear, distrust and a sad sense of his own failure. In his effort to escape from his own loneliness or feeling of inadequacy, he makes desperate attempts to gain attention and recognition, and these mistakes only increase the disapproval and lack of understanding which surround him. The

problem child or adult is not fundamentally evil by nature, we are told, but one who has never known the warmth and security of genuine affection. Because he is totally absorbed in solving his own problems, it becomes impossible for him to reach beyond himself with confidence.

Modern psychologists answer the charge that the way of love is weak. Actually, they tell us, it is the sure sign of strength, since only the confident, truly grown-up person with sufficient resources of good will can afford to be generous with others, resisting the temptation to bicker over trifles. He alone has the patience to help others in their mistakes or failures, to forget insults or injuries. By contrast, quick temper, jealousy, and the desire "to get even" are evidences of emotional poverty, childish fears and lack of inner security.

They go further and warn that the way to prevent wars and the breakdown of civilization is not the use of more destructive weapons but a greater amount of understanding. Strange as it may seem, it is not a religious leader but a psychiatrist* writing as a scientist who insists:

In order that the human race may survive on this planet, it is necessary that there should be enough people in enough places in the world who do not have to fight each other, who are not the kinds of people who will fight each other, and who are the kinds of people who will take effective measures whenever it is necessary to prevent other people's fighting.

Of all men who ever lived, no one had as much reason to condemn his enemies and to resent the injustice of his fate as did Jesus. In spite of his complete innocence, regardless of the truth and power of his message, he was mistreated and misunderstood, slandered, falsely accused, betrayed, beaten, insulted, crucified. Under circumstances far less cruel, Ma-

* G. B. Chisholm, *Survey Graphic*, October, 1947.

homet cried out against his foes, and many other great leaders have grown bitter and rebellious. Yet even on the cross, the attitude of Jesus was still that of understanding and love for those who were crucifying him:

... "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing."

Luke 23:34

As long as any man lives, he must face the necessity of dealing with people; with members of his own family, with neighbors, as well as with strangers in other parts of the world. You will have to decide continually how you are going to treat those who disagree with you and want to argue, who treat you unfairly, who injure you, who want to fight. The time-honored method of settling differences is to use force of one kind or another. This is very expensive for individuals, groups, or nations, as people have discovered over and over again. Future generations for centuries to come will be paying the cost of past wars and preparations for the next. Even more serious is the loss of time and human energy that might otherwise have been devoted to constructive purposes, such as the raising of living standards all over the world, new progress in the conquest of disease, or the creation of beauty in art, music or literature.

The crucial need of the world today, therefore, is for an increasing number of men and women who are sufficiently grown-up in their attitudes toward other people that they are able to abandon childish reactions of distrust, selfishness, hatred and fear. Because they have within them sufficient resources of love and understanding, these men will resolve to discover the causes of conflict in human relationships and will take proper steps to correct them. They will prove stronger and wiser than any generation that has previously lived if they have the courage to put into practice

the mature attitude of love which Jesus disclosed centuries ago.

"I give you a new command, to love one another—as I have loved you, you are to love one another; by this everyone will recognize that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."

John 16:34, 35



CHAPTER 21

A New Way to Win Happiness

ASK ANY group of people the secret of happiness and you will get a variety of answers. Some will identify happiness with popularity or romance. Others think it comes as a reward for hard work, in terms of influence and fame. Still others will tell you that the only way to be happy is to have money enough to buy the things you want.

There is, however, another answer which is radically different from any of these, for it completely reverses the usual idea of happiness and of the way to achieve it. Yet when tried, this way has proved to be the only sure method of achieving a happy life. It is the answer that Jesus gave.

You may wonder whether a man who has been described as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" knew anything about happiness. Many artists have pictured Jesus as pale and sad. So much emphasis has been placed on the tragedy of his death that too little attention has been given to the irrepressible joy that shines continually through the record of his life.

Actually Jesus was a radiant person who inspired others with enthusiasm and hope. He enjoyed banquets and the gay companionship of friends so much that his enemies accused him of being a glutton and a drunkard. In sharp contrast with those who fasted twice a week and went about looking disagreeable and mournful, Jesus insisted that he and his

friends were like a wedding party with so much reason to celebrate that they could not spend time fasting.

He was told, "The disciples of John fast frequently and offer prayers, as do the disciples of the Pharisees; but your adherents eat and drink." Jesus said to them,

"Can you make friends at a wedding fast, while the bridegroom is beside them?

A time will come when the bridegroom is taken from them, and then they will fast at that time."

Luke 5:33-35

Religion was no solemn, funereal business, depressing the spirit and depriving one of all pleasure and enjoyment, but a glorious, thrilling experience which disclosed an amazing new vision of what human life could become. Jesus wanted people to live joyously. He told them how to gain true satisfaction, how to win lasting happiness. He must have repeated his prescription on many occasions, for it appears four times in the record: once in Mark, twice in Luke and once in John.

"... for whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

What profit is it for a man to gain the whole world and to forfeit his soul? What could a man offer as an equivalent for his soul?"

Mark 8:35-37

"Whoever tries to secure his life will lose it, and whoever loses it will preserve it."

Luke 17:33

This is indeed a bewildering statement: cling to life and you will lose it; be willing to lose it and you will find it. Yet strange as it may seem, Jesus was stating here a universal law of life, as true and unchanging as the law of gravity. The

selfish, self-centered human being is not only unhappy but blind, incomplete, only partly alive, a fragment of the person he might be.

"The eye is the lamp of the body: so, if your Eye is generous,
the whole of your body will be illumined,
but if your Eye is selfish,
the whole of your body will be darkened.
And if your very light turns dark,
then—what a darkness it is!"

Matthew 6:22, 23

Today both psychologists and physicians are rediscovering this fundamental truth. The psychologist tells us that the person who thinks only of himself is mentally sick. He shuts himself within a tiny world which revolves about him and his desires. He is filled with fears and suspicions about anything that might disturb his private realm. He gradually loses his capacity to think straight, to understand and appreciate the real world outside himself, to enjoy the companionship of other people, until at last he ceases to be a normal human being. The modern doctor is finding out that it is dangerous to think too much about your health or to brood over real or imaginary ailments; he has evidence to prove that worry can cause not only nervous breakdowns but chronic heart trouble, and other diseases.

But how is it possible to save one's life by losing it? Listen again to Jesus as his words were reported by John.

"Truly, truly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain; but if it dies, it bears rich fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who cares not for his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life."

John 12:24, 25

Just as the grain of wheat has within it the possibility of unfolding into a flourishing plant, human beings have within

them many capacities: for love and friendship, for the discovery of truth and beauty, for loyalty to a worthy cause, for the achievement of purpose. As a man develops these capacities and realizes them more and more, his personality expands and he lives more fully and more joyously. But he cannot give himself to the development of this happier self unless he outgrows the petty, childish self that insists upon its own immediate, self-centered desires.

The athlete can tell you that he gained not only strength and skill but full genuine enjoyment of his sport by losing himself in strenuous periods of training. The musician discovers the real beauty of music by giving up long years to study and practice. The father and mother of a happy family realize that they did not know what it was to live until they completely lost themselves in love for each other. They will tell you that life expanded further and took on greater meaning as they forgot self in endless concern for the welfare of their children.

Some may say that this means self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-surrender. They may call it that if they like. But the happiest as well as the greatest men and women of every generation are those who have found the joy of selfless devotion to a worth-while task. David Livingstone, the famous explorer and missionary to Africa, experienced illness, privation, suffering, and the tragic loss of his wife. Yet in the end he said, "I never made a sacrifice in my life." Giving his life to the service of humanity, he discovered far more than a dark continent: he learned the supreme joy of a great mission.

It would be a mistake to suppose that Jesus wanted people to make useless sacrifices or throw away their lives without purpose. He regarded personality as too precious for that. He saw that people are endowed with a variety of talents and abilities, each one being responsible for whatever he has. The more these capacities are used, the more personality expands, and the richer, more satisfying life becomes. Jesus told a

parable about three men who were put in charge of their employer's estate.

"For the case is that of a man going abroad, who summoned his servants and handed over his property to them; to one he gave twelve hundred pounds, to another five hundred, and to another two hundred and fifty; each got according to his capacity. Then the man went abroad. The servant who had got the twelve hundred pounds went at once and traded with them, making another twelve hundred. Similarly the servant who had got the five hundred pounds made another five hundred. But the servant who had got the two hundred and fifty pounds went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

"Long afterwards, the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. Then the servant who had got the twelve hundred pounds came forward, bringing twelve hundred more. He said, 'You handed me twelve hundred pounds, sir; here I have gained another twelve hundred.' His master said to him, 'Capital, you excellent and trusty servant! You have been trusty in charge of a small sum: I will put you in charge of a large sum. Come and share your master's feast.'

"Then the servant with the five hundred pounds came forward. He said, 'You handed me five hundred pounds, sir; here I have gained another five hundred.' His master said to him, 'Capital, you excellent and trusty servant! You have been trusty in charge of a small sum: I will put you in charge of a large sum. Come and share your master's feast.'

"Then the servant who had got the two hundred and fifty pounds came forward. He said, 'I knew you were a hard man, sir, reaping where you never sowed and gathering where you never winnowed. So I was afraid; I went and hid your two hundred and fifty pounds in the earth. There's your money!' His master said to him in reply, 'You rascal, you idle servant!

You knew, did you, that I reap where I never sowed and gather where I never winnowed! Well then, you should have handed my money to the bankers, and I would have got my capital with interest when I came back. Take therefore the two hundred and fifty pounds away from him; give it to the servant who had the twelve hundred.

For to everyone who has shall more be given and richly given;

but from him who has nothing, even what he has shall be taken."

Matthew 25:14-29

Anyone can observe that seeds which are not planted soon die, that machinery which stands idle gradually rusts, that human capacities which are not used vanish and are lost.

Jesus' method of gaining happiness, however, is not for the timid or the faint-hearted. The man who failed to invest his money said, "I was afraid." He did not have the courage to risk disapproval. He calculated in advance the advantages and disadvantages of every move and was never willing to enter whole-heartedly into any situation for fear of disappointment. Such a person misses the joy of friendship and love as well as the satisfaction of throwing all his resources into whatever job he has to do.

A modern psychologist has described happiness as "a state of going somewhere, whole-heartedly, one-directionally, without regret or reservation."* This is but a restatement of the prescription which Jesus gave: the absorption of oneself in work or play.

Jesus also upset the conventional notion that the way to win happiness is by attracting attention or applause. To be sure, children want and need a great deal of attention. This is evidence of their instinctive desire to be wanted and loved.

* William H. Sheldon, *Psychology and the Promethean Will* (Harper & Brothers, 1938), p. 9.

As we grow up, however, we are expected to outgrow such childish demands and to enter into the experiences of other people, sharing their difficulties as well as their joys.

The psychologist is now emphasizing that social imagination or empathy, as it is called, is one of the most important capacities we are endowed with. As we develop greater use of this ability to enter into the life of another and feel it as our own, many of the conflicts that plague modern life will be more easily resolved.

Because of his vivid imagination and understanding, Jesus saw that as a man loses himself and his own sense of importance in an ever widening circle of concern, his own personality expands, his interests broaden, and he lives more fully and happily. Thus genuine satisfaction comes not through receiving attention but in giving it, not in dominating others but in serving them.

"The scribes and Pharisees sit on the seat of Moses; so do whatever they tell you; obey them, but do not do as they do. They talk but they do not act; they make up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders, but they will not stir a finger to remove them.

"Besides, all they do is done to catch the notice of men; . . . they are fond of the best places at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues; they like to be saluted in the market-places and to be called 'rabbi' by men.

But you are not to be called 'rabbi,'

for One is your teacher, and you are all brothers;
you are not to call anyone 'father' on earth,

for One is your heavenly Father;
nor must you be called 'leaders,'

for One is your leader, even the Christ.

He who is greatest among you must be your servant."

Matthew 23:2-11

He also told a parable to the guests, when he observed how they picked out the best places. "When anyone invites you to a marriage-banquet," he said, "never lie down in the best place, in case a more distinguished guest than yourself has been invited; then the host will tell you, 'Make room for him,' and you will proceed in shame to take the lowest place. No, when you are invited, go and recline in the lowest place, so that when your host enters he will tell you, 'Move higher up, my friend.' Then you will be honoured before your fellow guests.

For everyone who uplifts himself will be humbled,
and he who humbles himself will be uplifted."

Luke 14:7-11

James and John, the sons of Zebedaeus, came up to him saying, "Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask you." So he said, "What do you want me to do for you?" They said to him, "Give us seats, one at your right hand and one at your left hand, in your glory."

Jesus said, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I have to drink, or undergo the baptism I have to undergo?" They said to him, "We can." Jesus said, "You shall drink the cup I have to drink and undergo the baptism I have to undergo; but it is not for me to grant seats at my right or my left hand—these belong to the men for whom they have been destined."

When the ten heard of this, they burst into indignation at James and John; so Jesus called them and said,

"You know that the so-called rulers of the Gentiles lord
it over them,
and their great men overbear them:
not so with you.

Whoever wants to be the great man among you must be
your servant,

and whoever of you wants to be first must be the slave of all;
 for the Son of man himself has not come to be served
 but to serve,
 and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Mark 10:35-45

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he had to leave for Jerusalem and endure great suffering at the hands of the elders and high priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised on the third day.

Peter took him and began to reprove him for it: "God forbid, Lord," he said. "This must not be!" But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, you Satan! You are a hindrance to me! Your outlook is not God's but man's."

Then said Jesus to his disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me;

for whoever wants to save his life will lose it,
 and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

What profit will it be if a man gains the whole world and forfeits his own soul?"

Matthew 16:21-26

When he gave to the world this new secret of happiness, Jesus was challenging us to live adventurously, enthusiastically, even dangerously. He did not promise a life without disappointment, conflict, or suffering. On the contrary, he repeatedly warned his followers that those who accepted his ideas must be prepared to face bitter opposition, even death. Yet he assured them that they would have that inner glow of satisfaction which comes only to those who are willing to invest themselves without reservation in the highest purposes they know.

"Blessed are you when men will hate you,
when they will excommunicate you and denounce you
and defame you as wicked, on account of the Son
of man;
rejoice on that day and leap for joy!
rich is your reward in heaven—
for their fathers did the very same to the prophets."

Luke 6:22, 23

Jesus himself was magnificent proof of his own formula. When his enemies were closing in on him and the end was near, he had supper with his friends and talked to them about peace of mind and his own assurance of victory. Many years later when the account was written, it was the joyousness of Jesus that was most clearly remembered. These words of farewell do not sound as if they came from a man who knew he was about to die. And the supper ended with the usual "hymn of praise"!

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then ask whatever you like and you shall have it. . . . As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; remain within my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain within my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain within his love.

"I have told you this, that my joy may be within you and your joy complete. This is my command: you are to love one another as I have loved you.

". . . Just now you are in sorrow, but I shall see you again and your heart will rejoice—with a joy that no one can take from you. And on that day you will not ask me any questions. Truly, truly I tell you, whatever you ask the Father, he will give you in my name; hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

"Behold, the time is coming, it has come already, when you will be scattered to your homes, every one of you, leaving me alone. But I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said all this to you that in me you may have peace; in the world you have trouble, but courage! —I have conquered the world."

John 15:7-12; 16:22-24, 32, 33

After the hymn of praise they went out to the Hill of Olives.

Mark 14:26



CHAPTER 22

A New Kind of Wealth

THE RICHEST man in town is usually described as the one with the largest bank account or the most luxurious house or the most prosperous business. Wealthy people are generally regarded as the most important, obviously successful, the truly valuable citizens. Let it be known that an individual is a millionaire and he at once receives special consideration.

From the time we are small children we accept the idea that there is something magical about money. We dream of inheriting a fortune or discovering hidden treasure, then spend happy hours deciding how we will spend our riches. Many young men and women grow up with the single ambition of becoming rich, and their choice of business, occupation or profession is determined chiefly by the size of the income that can be earned in a particular vocation.

It is not strange that money looms so important in our lives. We must have money to pay for food, clothing and a house to live in, and other necessities. With money mothers and fathers can provide for their children opportunities for gaining knowledge or special training, or for travel that may lead to greater understanding of the world. Money makes possible scientific research and the countless products of modern invention. Money builds schools, churches, hospitals, libraries, art museums, concert halls, theatres, magnificent cities and highways. Money is absolutely essential for many purposes in our twentieth-century world.

Jesus also recognized the need for money. The Good Samaritan had to have money to pay the innkeeper with whom he left the victim of highway robbery. In another parable Jesus told about the hiring of workers and their payment in wages. On another occasion he mentioned the need to figure carefully the cost of building a tower in order to make sure that there was enough money to finish it. In still another he recounted a story of three men with money to invest, and how two of them made wise use of what they had, while the third hid his share in the ground, where it remained idle and unproductive. Far from being an impractical man with vague theories about life, Jesus had learned to make his living as a carpenter. From his own personal experience he knew about counting costs and getting paid for his own labor. It was Jesus who said, "the workman deserves his wages."

In Jesus' day, as in our own time, the rich were generally regarded as the most valuable and influential people of the community. The high priests and Pharisees, prosperous rulers and merchants were looked up to as the leading citizens, worthy of respect and admiration. Imagine, therefore, the astonishment of those who heard Jesus say for the first time :

"How difficult it is for those who have money to get into the Realm of God!" The disciples were amazed at what he said; so he repeated, "My sons, how difficult it is for those who rely on money to get into the Realm of God! It is easier for a camel to get through a needle's eye than for a rich man to get into the Realm of God."

Mark 10:23-25

Why was Jesus so discouraged about rich people that he despaired of their chances for heaven? Because he saw what happened to character when a man exalts money as his chief aim, when he considers it the most essential thing in life, and devotes all of his time and energy getting it and keeping

it. He knew that human beings were created for no such purpose, and that they can achieve fullness of life and joy only as they use their gifts for better purposes than the accumulation of lifeless possessions.

In his conversation with the rich young ruler, Jesus quickly put his finger on the weak spot in this man's character: his lack of concern about the needs of others. When challenged to help Jesus in his great crusade, this young man clung to his wealth as the thing he prized most. The name of this proud plutocrat is unknown today and his possessions have long since vanished. He is remembered only as the object of Jesus' pity.

He said, "I have observed all these commands from my youth." When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You lack one thing more; sell all you have, distribute the money among the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me." But when he heard that, he was vexed, for he was extremely rich. So Jesus looked at him and said, "How difficult it is for those who have money to enter the Realm of God! Why, it is easier for a camel to get through a needle's eye than for a rich man to get into the Realm of God."

His hearers said, "Then who ever can be saved?" He said, "What is impossible for men is possible for God." Peter said, "Well, we have left our homes and followed you!" He said to them, "I tell you truly, no one has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Realm of God, who does not receive ever so much more in this present world, and in the world to come life eternal."

Luke 18:21-30

Jesus knew that money cannot buy the treasures of life—love, faith, hope, truth, beauty, or even life itself. Whenever he saw people anxiously concerned about money, he warned

them, with sharp words and dramatic parable, that they should realize their mistake before it was too late.

A man out of the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to give me my share of our inheritance"; but he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over your affairs?" Then he said to them, "See and keep clear of covetousness in every shape and form, for a man's life is not part of his possessions because he has ample wealth."

He told them a parable. "A rich man's estate bore heavy crops. So he debated, 'What am I to do? I have no room to store my crops.' And he said, 'This is what I will do. I will pull down my granaries and build larger ones, where I can store all my produce and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample stores laid up for many a year; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Foolish man, this very night your soul is required from you; and who will get all you have prepared?' So fares the man who lays up treasure for himself, instead of gaining the riches of God."

To his disciples he said, "Therefore I tell you,
never trouble about what you are to eat in life,
nor about what you are to put on your body;
life is something more than food,
and the body is something more than clothes.

Look at the crows! they neither sow nor reap,
no storehouse or granary have they,
and yet God feeds them.

How much more are you worth than birds!

Which of you can add an ell to his height by troubling
about it?

and if you cannot manage even this, why trouble over
other things?

Look how the lilies neither spin nor weave;

and yet, I tell you, even Solomon in all his grandeur
was never robed like one of them.

Now if God so clothes grass which blooms to-day in the field and is thrown to-morrow into the furnace, how much more will he clothe you! O men, how little you trust him! So do not seek food and drink and be worried; pagans make food and drink their aim in life, but your Father knows quite well you need that; only seek his Realm, and it will be yours over and above. Fear not, you little flock, for your Father's delight is to give you the Realm.

Sell what you possess and give it away in alms,
make purses for yourselves that never wear out:
get treasure in heaven that never fails,
that no thief can get at, no moth destroy.
For where your treasure lies, your heart will lie there too."

Luke 12:13-34

What did Jesus mean when he talked about "the riches of God" and "treasure in heaven"? What is this new wealth which cannot be lost or stolen?

If we would understand his definition of riches, we must remember what Jesus held of greatest value in the universe: human personality, the inner self which is created in the spiritual image of God, the character of a person with its capacity for growth, for understanding, for purpose. This is the treasure hidden deep within each human being, an invisible endowment which belongs at the top of the scale of values. By "the riches of God," Jesus meant those priceless qualities of mind which cannot be purchased for any amount of money: generosity, good will, kindness, love, honor, truth, justice, courage, mercy, loyalty, sympathy, understanding, unselfishness, faith. Here is true wealth which lasts forever, continuing to enrich its owners and the entire universe.

Jesus realized the obstacles which interfere with the growth of character. The chief of these he believed to be greed,

the childish desire for material things, the love of wealth, which he called Mammon, an old Aramaic word for riches. To become extravagantly devoted to riches is to descend to the level of the jungle, becoming ruthless in the savage struggle to win the lion's share of them. Jesus warned that sooner or later each one must make the crucial decision whether material things are to be reckoned first, or the riches of character.

“No servant can serve two masters:
either he will hate one and love the other,
or else he will stand by the one and despise the other—
you cannot serve God and Mammon.”

Now the Pharisees, who were fond of money, heard all this, and they sneered at him. So he told them, “You are the people who get men to think you are good, but God knows what your hearts are! What is lofty in the view of man is loathsome in the eyes of God.”

Luke 16:13-15

“Do not be troubled, then, and cry, ‘What are we to eat?’ or ‘what are we to drink?’ or ‘how are we to be clothed?’ (pagans make all that their aim in life) for well your heavenly Father knows you need all that. Seek God’s Realm and his goodness, and all that will be yours over and above.”

Matthew 6:31-33

Jesus saw people so obsessed with the desire for money and the things it would buy that they were willing to sacrifice honesty, love, loyalty, even their own souls and the souls of others, in the struggle. He saw the desire for money filling men with avarice until they became blind to the needs or the rights of others. He saw the scramble for money destroying good will, mercy and all sense of justice. He saw love of money robbing men, women and even little children of their chance to develop healthy bodies and strong character. He

saw love of money causing the priests of the Temple to carry on a vicious system of graft, robbing the poor and impoverishing the very people they were supposed to help.

"There was a rich man, clad in purple and fine linen, who lived sumptuously every day. Outside his door lay a poor man called Lazarus; he was a mass of ulcers, and fain to feed on the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. (The very dogs used to come and lick his ulcers.)

"Now it happened that the poor man died, and he was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man died too, and was buried. And as he was being tortured in Hades, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus in his bosom; so he called out, 'Father Abraham, take pity on me, send Lazarus to dip his finger-tip in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in these flames.' But Abraham said, 'Remember, my son, you got all the bliss when you were alive, just as Lazarus got the ills of life; he is in comfort now, and you in anguish. Besides all that, a great gulf yawns between us and you, to keep back those who want to cross from us to you and also those who would pass from you to us.'

"Then he said, 'Well, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers; let him bear testimony to them, that they may not come to this place of torture as well.' 'They have got Moses and the prophets,' said Abraham, 'they can listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone only goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced, not even if one rose from the dead.'

Luke 16:19-31

And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, "Beware of the scribes! They like to walk about in long robes, they are fond of being saluted in the marketplaces, of securing

the front seats in synagogues and the best places at banquets; they prey upon the property of widows and offer long, unreal prayers. All the heavier will their sentence be!"

Luke 20:45-47

Now the Jewish passover was near, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. There he found, seated inside the temple, dealers in cattle, sheep and pigeons, also money-changers. Making a scourge of cords, he drove them all, sheep and cattle together, out of the temple, scattered the coins of the brokers and upset their tables, and told the pigeon-dealers, "Away with these! My Father's house is not to be turned into a shop!"

"It is written," he told them, "my house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers."

John 2:13-16

Luke 19:46

Finally, Jesus saw one of his own disciples so obsessed with desire for money that he was willing to betray his best friend.

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went and said to the high priest, "What will you give me for betraying him to you?" And they weighed out for him thirty silver pieces. From that moment he sought a good opportunity to betray him.

When morning came, all the high priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus, so as to have him put to death. After binding him, they led him off and handed him over to Pontius Pilate the governor.

Then Judas his betrayer saw he was condemned, and repented; he brought back the thirty silver pieces to the high priests and elders, saying, "I did wrong in betraying innocent blood."

"What does that matter to us?" they said, "it is your affair, not ours!" Then he flung down the silver pieces in the temple and went off and hanged himself.

Matthew 26:14-16; 27:1-5

Many years after Jesus was crucified, one of the first Christians wrote the following paragraph containing the famous statement that "love of money is the root of all evil." Money itself is not evil, but man's love of it distorts his sense of values and eventually destroys character.

Those who are eager to be rich get tempted and trapped in many senseless and pernicious propensities, that drag men down to ruin and destruction. For love of money is the root of all mischief; it is by aspiring to be rich that certain individuals have gone astray from the faith and found themselves pierced with many a pang of remorse. Shun that, O man of God, aim at integrity, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, modesty; fight in the good fight of the faith, secure that life eternal to which you were called. . . .

I Timotheus 6:9-12



CHAPTER 23

A New Source of Power

POWER in any form is fascinating, whether it is a mighty waterfall pouring over a mountainside, or a jet plane streaking through the sky, or a giant locomotive thundering across the countryside. In the modern world we are surrounded by examples of vast physical power, as scientists and engineers have perfected techniques to harness and manipulate the energy of water and fire, sun and wind, and even of invisible atoms. Because these displays are so dramatic and impressive, we are likely to think of power only in terms of physical force.

Yet there are other types of power far more essential than the kind required to drive a motor or run a race. It is mental power which enables a man to invent the machine or to carry on scientific research. Creative energy is needed to paint a beautiful picture or compose a symphony. Spiritual power is required if men are to have vision to know right from wrong, and the courage to speak truth, fight injustice, and remain loyal to high ideals. Unless human beings can develop minds and characters even stronger than their physical equipment, they are doomed to the fate of the dinosaurs. This extinct species were the mightiest physically of all animals, but mentally they were deficient; today only their bones and footprints remain.

Where are we to seek the mental and spiritual power which will make it possible to use our enormous physical forces for good and not for evil, to build a better world and

not to destroy what we now have? As human beings we face a tremendous task requiring strength of mind and character on the part of men and nations.

Moreover, as individuals we want sufficient energy for living under the stress and strain of modern times. We want the kind of character that cannot be blown about by the changeable winds of opinion or circumstance, that does not collapse when obstacles or difficulties arise, that does not disintegrate under uncertainty and conflict.

If you were informed that you could establish contact with an inexhaustible source of mental and spiritual power, you would no doubt be eager to learn about this vast reservoir and would make every effort to establish connection with it. Yet it was news of just such a source of power which Jesus gave to the world. This was the secret of his own magnetism as a leader, the reason why he attained a unique place in history as the greatest personality who ever lived.

Too often in the past Jesus has been presented as a weakling, the helpless victim of pre-determined fate, a meek man destined to die on the cross. This is far from the truth. The record proves clearly that Jesus made deliberate choices and undertook his mission energetically. He knew that he would face bitter opposition, he counted the cost and resolved to take the full consequences, even if it meant the cross. Single-handed he challenged the established authorities of his day, initiating the world's greatest revolution. Because of his overpowering confidence, optimism, faith, and courage, he won the greatest victory of all time, not with military might but with ideas that are still determining the course of history. What then was the secret of his power?

The answer lies in his choice of purpose. The course Jesus was to take was not laid out for him to follow blindly. He was given free will, just like other human beings, and the time came when he was keenly tempted to use his great talents for other ends. That moment arrived just after his

baptism by John the Baptist, when he was fully conscious that he was endowed with unusual vision and gifts. There followed the temptations which he described afterwards to his disciples in picturesque language used by the prophet Ezekiel.

First, he was tempted to use his abilities selfishly to win material wealth and comfort; second, he was tempted to become a military conqueror instead of a spiritual leader; third, he was tempted to evade the suffering which inevitably befalls those who crusade for new ideas and a better world. His reply to each temptation expressed his decision to carry out a greater purpose than any of these. And with his decision came an increased surge of power.

From the Jordan, Jesus came back full of the holy Spirit, and for forty days he was led by the Spirit in the desert, while the devil tempted him. During these days he ate nothing, and when they were over he felt hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are God's son, tell this stone to become a loaf." Jesus replied to him, "It is written, Man is not to live on bread alone."

Then he lifted Jesus up and showed him all the realms of the universe in a single instant; and the devil said to him, "I will give you all their power and grandeur, for it has been made over to me and I can give it to anyone I choose. If you will worship before me, then it shall all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone."

Then he brought him to Jerusalem, and placing him on the pinnacle of the temple said to him, "If you are God's son, throw yourself down; for it is written,

He will give his angels charge of you to protect you,
and

They will bear you on their hands,
lest you strike your foot against a stone."

Jesus answered him, "It has been said, You shall not tempt the Lord your God." And after exhausting every kind of temptation, the devil left him till a fit opportunity arrived. Then Jesus came back in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and the news of him spread over all the surrounding country. He taught in their synagogues and was glorified by all. Coming to Nazaret, where he had been brought up, on the sabbath he entered the synagogue as was his custom. He stood up to read the lesson, and was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah; on opening the book he came upon the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me:

for he has consecrated me to preach the gospel to the poor,

he has sent me to proclaim release for captives
and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set free the oppressed,

to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.

Then, folding up the book, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him, and he proceeded to tell them that "To-day, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 4:1-21

With the reading of the passage from Isaiah he announced the purpose of his life. From his careful study of the great prophets Jesus had become convinced that here were ideas which God wanted the world to accept. From these writings Jesus had achieved full understanding of God as the Champion of Justice, as Purpose, as the mighty Spiritual Power for right and truth ruling the world and ready to share His power with those willing to carry out His purposes. Jesus became convinced that he had a mighty mission to perform in teaching people what it means to be true children of God, partners with Him in creating a more glorious world. Jesus was undoubtedly familiar with the selection from the

Book of Isaiah in which meaningless forms of religion are contrasted with a devotion to God's will. He relied on the definite promise that the Eternal will "guide you . . . and renew your strength."

"Is not this my chosen fast,
the Lord, the Eternal, asks,
to loosen all that fetters men unfairly,
and to relax its grip,
to free poor debtors from their bonds,
and break what binds them?

"It is to share your food with hungry men,
and take the homeless to your home,
to clothe the naked when you see them,
and never turn from any fellow-creature.

"Then shall light dawn for you,
with healing for your wounds;
you shall advance, your goodness in the van,
and the Eternal's glory as your rear-guard;
the Eternal will answer when you call,
and when you cry, he will say, 'Here am I!'

"If you will do away with all oppression,
with open scorn and words of malice,
if you bestow your bread upon the hungry,
and relieve men in misery,
then light shall dawn for you in darkness,
your dull hour shall be bright as noon,
and evermore shall the Eternal guide you,
guiding you without fail;

"he will refresh you in dry places,
and renew your strength,
till you are like a watered garden,
like an oasis with a steadfast spring."

Isaiah 58:6-11

It was, therefore, his sense of high purpose which gave Jesus abundant resources of power, sufficient for his work. He explained this to his disciples when they found him talking to the Samaritan woman.

At this point his disciples came up; they were surprised that he was talking to a woman, but none of them said, "What is it?" or, "Why are you talking to her?" Then the woman left her water-pot, and going off to the town told the people, "Come here, look at a man who has told me everything I ever did! Can he be the Christ?" They set out from the town on their way to him.

Meantime the disciples pressed him, saying, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food, of which you know nothing."

So the disciples asked each other, "Can anyone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. You have a saying, have you not, 'Four months yet, then harvest?' Look round, I tell you; see, the fields are white for harvesting! The reaper is already getting his wages and harvesting for life eternal, so that the sower shares the reaper's joy."

John 4:27-37

Jesus continually renewed this sense of purpose, which was the secret of unlimited spiritual energy, by keeping in contact with God through prayer. Frequently he withdrew from the crowds that gathered about him to spend long hours in quiet meditation. Both in the discourses of the prophets and in the poetry of the Psalms he had found repeated assurance that God gives both guidance and strength to those who ask Him. No doubt Jesus knew by heart these inspiring lines from Isaiah and the Psalms:

... For he will show you favour when you sigh,
 and answer you, soon as he hears your cry.
 Though scant and scarce may be
 your bread and water from the Lord,
 yet he your Teacher never leaves you now;
 you see your Teacher for yourselves,
 and when you swerve to right or left,
 you hear a Voice behind you whispering,
 "This is the way, walk here."

Isaiah 30:19-21

Search me, O God, and know my heart,
 test me and try my thoughts;
 see if I am taking a wrong course,
 and do thou lead me on the lines of life eternal.

Psalm 139:23, 24

Teach me to do thy will,
 thou art my God;
 guide me by thy good Spirit
 on a straight road.

Psalm 143:10

With such a background, prayer was as natural to Jesus as breathing, and as essential for the strenuous task he had chosen to accomplish. Prayer was not a trick to persuade God to do something, but a means of discovering what God wanted him to do. When his disciples asked him to teach them to pray, he began with the desire that God's will be done. He ended with the hope of escaping temptation. Remembering his three great temptations, this was another way of saying, "Let me not fail to carry out Thy purposes!"

"Let this be how you pray:
 'our Father in heaven,
 thy name be revered,
 thy Reign begin,

thy will be done on earth as in heaven!
 give us to-day our bread for the morrow,
 and forgive us our debts
 as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors,
 and lead us not into temptation
 but deliver us from evil.' "

Matthew 6:9-13

Both ministers and psychologists, who have had long experience with people's problems, have discovered that personality is transformed and character is strengthened when a person regards himself as an instrument for the accomplishment of some needed service. In the words of Jesus, as reported by John, he claims no credit for what he says or does but describes himself as a spokesman for God, an instrument of God's will.

So Jesus made this answer to them: "Truly, truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, nothing but what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, the Son also does the same. The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he is doing himself.

"My teaching is not my own but his who sent me; anyone who chooses to do his will, shall understand whether my teaching comes from God or whether I am talking on my own authority. He who talks on his own authority aims at his own credit, but he who aims at the credit of the person who sent him, he is sincere, and there is no dishonesty in him."

John 5:19, 20, 16-18

"He who believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me, and he who beholds me beholds him who sent me. I have come as light into the world, that no one who believes in me may remain in the dark. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, it is not I who judge him: for I have not come to judge the world but to save the

world. He who rejects me and will not receive my words has indeed a judge: the word I have spoken will judge him on the last day, for I have not spoken of my own accord—the Father who sent me, he it was who ordered me what to say and what to speak. And I know that his orders mean eternal life. Therefore, when I speak, I speak as the Father has told me."

John 12:44-50

Because his own sense of purpose was so strong, and because he was so vitally aware of God's purposes for mankind, he believed in the possibility of establishing the Reign of God during his own lifetime, thus creating the Realm of heaven on earth. He was confident the means were at hand if only people would repent; that is, change their old patterns of thought and action.

From that day Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, the Reign of heaven is near."

Then Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Reign, and healing every sickness and disease. As he saw the crowds he was moved with pity for them; they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd.

Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few; so pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to gather his harvest."

Matthew 4:17; 9:35-38

He trained his disciples and sent them out with these instructions:

"And preach as you go, tell men, 'The Reign of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out daemons; give without being paid, as you have got without paying; you are not to take gold or silver or coppers in your

girdle, nor a wallet for the road, nor two shirts, nor sandals, nor stick—the workman deserves his rations."

Matthew 10:7-10

It is difficult for us to realize how revolutionary was this campaign to establish the Reign of God. Not only did it conflict sharply with the accepted thinking of the day, but it also meant a radically new approach to the problems of human suffering.

Since little was then known of the nature of disease and death, every illness was attributed to a demon or evil spirit. One rendered unconscious by pain or fever was considered dead. Rules were rigidly enforced, prohibiting the touching of the dead or diseased, who were regarded as "unclean" and therefore dangerous, defiling those who touched them or even remained in the same house. Dead bodies had to be buried before sundown. All types of skin diseases, including ringworm, were classed as leprosy, and made the patient untouchable.

What then must it have meant to multitudes of victims to have someone appear willing to wash and treat their infections, provide cold water for their burning fevers, and prevent the helpless, sick and unconscious from being buried alive. It is small wonder that astonishing reports quickly circulated of the dead being raised and the stricken recovering. For such help to be given freely and with kindness, this indeed must have seemed like heaven on earth.

Thrilling as such adventure was, Jesus was aware that his disciples would be persecuted for ignoring taboos considered sacred. He himself had already been accused of being crazy, of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Therefore he warned his followers to be prepared, at the same time assuring them that they would receive power and inspiration to carry them through any crisis.

"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be wise like serpents and guileless like doves. Beware of men: they will hand you over to sanhedrins and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be haled before governors and kings for my sake—it will be a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. Now, when they bring you up for trial, never trouble yourselves about how to speak or what to say; what you are to say will come to you at the moment, for you are not the speakers, it is the Spirit of your Father that is speaking through you.

"... If men have called the master of the house Beelzebul,

how much more will they miscall his servants!

Fear them not:—

nothing is veiled that shall not be revealed,
or hidden that shall not be known;

what I tell you in the dark, you must utter in the open,
what you hear in a whisper, you must proclaim on
the housetop,

Have no fear of those who kill the body but cannot kill
the soul:

rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body
in Gehenna.

"He who receives you receives me,
and he who receives me receives Him who sent me.

He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet,
will receive a prophet's reward;

he who receives a good man because he is good,
will receive a good man's reward.

and whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of
cold water because he is a disciple,

I tell you, he shall not lose his reward."

For only one brief year Jesus carried on vigorously his crusade. As his influence spread and his power increased, the opposition of the High Priests and the Pharisees became more bitter; Jesus was forced to realize that the cross was inevitable. He knew the suffering and the shame of such a death. How was he to gain the strength to face so terrible an ordeal with calm patience and the spirit to forgive those who crucified him?

He had kept close contact with God through prayer, ascending mountains to be alone with the vast Spirit whom he knew as his spiritual Father. Again and again he called upon Him for guidance and strength when he met increasing opposition and saw the forces of Jews and Romans being organized against him. Finally in the Garden of Gethsemane he wrestled for the last time with one of the great temptations of his life: the desire to escape suffering. Three times he asked to be spared, but each time he added the magnificent words, "Yet, not what I will but what thou wilt." At last he knew he had God's answer, and as the instrument of God's purpose, he was endowed with power to endure the cross, the full faith that despite death he would eventually achieve complete victory for his cause.

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he told the disciples, "Sit here, till I go over there and pray." But he took Peter and the two sons of Zebedaeus along with him; and when he began to feel distressed and agitated, he said to them, "My heart is sad, sad even to death; stay here and watch with me." Then he went forward a little and fell on his face, praying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass me. Yet, not what I will but what thou wilt."

Then he went to the disciples and found them asleep; and he said to Peter, "So the three of you could not watch with me for a single hour? Watch and pray, all of you, that you

may not slip into temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak."

Again he went away for the second time, praying, "My Father, if this cup cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done." And when he returned, he found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went back for the third time, praying in the same words as before.

Then he went to the disciples and said to them, "Still asleep? still resting? The hour is near, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinful men. Come, rise, let us be going; here is my betrayer close at hand!"

Matthew 26:36-46

Two criminals were also led out with him to be executed, and when they came to the place called The Skull, they crucified him there along with the criminals, one at his right and one at his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing."

The people stood and stared, while the rulers sneered at him, saying, "He saved others, let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One!" The soldiers made fun of him too by coming up and handing him vinegar, saying, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

One of the criminals who had been hanged also abused him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well." But the other checked him, saying, "Have you no fear even of God? You are suffering the same punishment as he. And we suffer justly; we are getting what we deserve for our deeds. But he has done no harm." And he added, "Jesus, do not forget me when you come to reign." "I tell you truly," said Jesus, "you will be in paradise with me this very day." By this time it was about twelve o'clock, and darkness covered the whole land till three o'clock, owing to an eclipse of the sun; the curtain in the middle of the temple was torn in two.

Then with a loud cry Jesus said, "Father, I trust my spirit to thy hands," and with these words he expired.

Luke 23:32-34, 35-37, 39-46

Is it possible for men and women in the twentieth century to make contact with the same source of power that fortified Jesus? Or did he consider himself so unique that no one else could do what he was able to do? His own answer to these questions is both reassuring and challenging. It is the answer he gave to his disciples at the Last Supper as reported by John: the promise that they would do not only "the very deeds" that he did, but "still greater deeds than these."

But the conditions he set down are equally clear: acceptance of his ideas and the willingness to help carry out the purposes which God has for the world. Jesus thought of God as the spiritual Father of mankind, the universal Spirit of love, truth, justice, mercy, so vast that the mind of man cannot fathom Him, yet so near that in Him "we live, and move, and exist." Jesus believed that God expects us to work with Him as partners in the achievement of His purposes. To do this is to establish contact with the Creative Energy of the universe.

"Truly, truly I tell you, he who believes in me will do the very deeds I do, and still greater deeds than these. For I am going to the Father, and I will do whatever you ask in my name, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; I will do whatever you ask me in my name.

"If you love me you will keep my commands, and I will ask the Father to give you another Helper to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: the world cannot receive him, because it neither sees nor knows him, but you know him, because he remains with you and will be within you.

"I will not leave you forlorn; I am coming to you. A little while longer and the world will see me no more; but you will see me, because I am living and you will be living too. You

will understand, on that day, that I am in my Father and you are in me and I am in you. He who possesses my commands and obeys them is he who loves me, and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and appear to him."

John 14:12-21

It may be difficult to believe that there is some vital task which you as a single individual are expected to perform. Yet all the evidence proves that God works only through human beings to give to the world the miracles of science and medicine, the beauty of great art and music, the joys of family and friends, the truth of great literature, the wisdom of scholars and philosophers, the vision of wise leaders. As one poet* has written, God

"... could not make
Antonio Stradivari's violins
without Antonio."

You may not be born with the skill to make fine violins, but you do possess some talent equally important. If you discover it and resolve to use it only for the highest purpose you know, you too will receive the power that comes from partnership with God.

* George Eliot, "Stradivarius," Complete Poems, p. 400.



CHAPTER 24

A New Promise of Life

THE strongest, most persistent desire of human beings is for life. Yet the longer we live, the more we realize that physical existence itself is not enough. We feel more alive at some moments than at others. Life is not merely a matter of eating and sleeping but also of hoping, believing, creating, achieving, aspiring.

Some people have more energy than others, more love of adventure, more imagination, more zest, more faith in the future, more spontaneous enjoyment of life. By comparison with these fortunate individuals, others seem geared at half-speed, weighed down by worries and fears, their spirits and energies paralyzed by doubt and lack of vision.

What makes the difference between the person who is gloriously alive and the one who finds life dull and meaningless? There may be a variety of reasons: some for example are burdened by poverty or sickness, or the shattering of hope by sudden accident or the disaster of war. The fundamental difference among people, however, does not depend on their being fortunate or handicapped but on the attitude they take toward their difficulties. One man is stimulated to greater effort by a situation which spells utter defeat for another. Within the mind, in the pattern of one's thinking lies the real source of enthusiasm for life or the lack of it.

The most radiant personality who ever lived was Jesus of Nazareth. So contagious was his zest for life that strong young men left everything to follow him. Because of his vigor

of character, multitudes pressed about him to see his face, to hear his voice, to catch the inspiration of his message.

Jesus might have considered himself seriously handicapped. Born into a poor, humble family, belonging to a subjugated nation in a remote corner of the Roman world, Jesus could easily have felt that it was useless to try to get anyone to listen to his ideas. Why could not his lot have been cast in a well-to-do Roman circle where there would have been some chance of his becoming a learned philosopher or a successful general, he might have asked. Thus he might have abandoned hope of becoming more than an unknown carpenter. Instead, he had within himself that amazing pattern of attitudes and ideas which were to make him the greatest leader in human history, the wonder of the ages.

Jesus conceived of life in terms of mind and character, as the full development of that inner spirit which is created in the likeness of God. He found people discouraged and blinded by ignorance, by misery, by hatred, by lack of faith in God and in themselves. He undertook to inspire them to think in new directions, to forget old values and discover new ones, to ignore old limitations and see new possibilities. Above all, he wanted men and women to become aware of the vast spiritual resources within themselves.

Perhaps more than anyone else, the writer of the Gospel of John grasped the deeper meaning of what Jesus had to say. This book, therefore, can be regarded as an interpretation of the spiritual quality of Jesus' message. John emphasized the glowing promise of life, and quoted Jesus as saying:

"What gives life is the Spirit: flesh is of no avail at all. The words I have uttered to you are spirit and life."

"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full."

John 6:63; 10:10

In John's account of the conversation with Nicodemus, the rich Pharisee, Jesus explains that ability to see the visible world is not enough. The real world is invisible: God's realm of truth and love, of justice and mercy. This is the eternal realm which will outlast the physical. To enter that realm, to achieve spiritual vision, however, it is necessary to "be born from above."

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who belonged to the Jewish authorities; he came one night to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know you have come from God to teach us, for no one could perform these Signs of yours unless God were with him."

Jesus replied, "Truly, truly I tell you, no one can see God's Realm unless he is born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter his mother's womb over again and be born?"

Jesus replied, "Truly, truly I tell you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter God's Realm. What is born of the flesh is flesh: what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not wonder at me telling you, 'You must all be born from above.' The wind blows where it wills; you can hear its sound, but you never know where it has come from or where it goes: it is the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered, "How can that be?"

Jesus replied, "You do not understand this?—you, a teacher in Israel! Truly, truly I tell you, we are speaking of what we do understand, we testify to what we have actually seen—and yet you refuse our testimony."

"He who comes from above is far above all others; he who springs from earth belongs to earth and speaks of earth; he who comes from heaven is far above all others. He is testifying to what he has seen and heard, and yet no one accepts his testimony. Whoever does accept it certifies to the truth

of God—God gives him the Spirit in no sparing measure; the Father loves the Son and has given him control over everything. He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who disobeys the Son shall not see life—”

John 3:1-11, 31-36

To those who would accept this idea Jesus promised life, abundant life, filled to overflowing with confidence, joy, energy, enthusiasm. Even more than this he promised eternal life, beginning now and enduring beyond physical death into the long future.

For centuries the Jewish people had believed that God would deliver them from tyranny and oppression, and establish them in an earthly kingdom, a free and prosperous nation. But Jesus was quick to say that he had no such kingdom in view. Again and again he explained that the kingdom he had come to establish was not an earthly empire but a spiritual realm, where faith, love, truth, justice were recognized as the most powerful forces in the universe. He assured them that by recognizing the reality of this spiritual kingdom and becoming loyal citizens of it, they would win abundant life both here and hereafter.

In John's account of the trial before Pilate, Jesus tried in vain to explain to the Roman governor the nature of this spiritual kingdom. Compared with the conquests of Caesar's legions, his words seemed vague and foolish indeed.

So Pilate went back inside the praetorium and called Jesus, saying, “Then you are king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “Are you saying this of your own accord, or did other people tell you about me?” “Am I a Jew?” said Pilate. “Your own nation and the high priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?”

Jesus replied, “My realm does not belong to this world; if my realm did belong to this world, my men would have fought to prevent me being handed over to the Jews. No, my

realm lies elsewhere." "So you are a king?" said Pilate. "You!" "Certainly," said Jesus, "I am a king. This is why I was born, this is why I came into the world, to bear testimony to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

"Truth!" said Pilate, "what does truth mean? . . .

John 18:33-38

It was impossible for Jesus to make his meaning clear to those who thought only of earthly power. John reports that Jesus used various figures of speech in his attempt to emphasize the vital importance of the invisible spirit within as the true source of life. For example, when he talked to the Samaritan woman at the well, he called his message living water.

"Anyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give him will never thirst any more; the water that I shall give him will turn into a spring of water welling up to life eternal."

John 4:13, 14

On another occasion Jesus described himself as "the bread of life," just as essential for the growth of character as bread is for the nourishment of the body. Some of his listeners entirely missed his point, because they took his words literally:

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will never be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

"Truly, truly I tell you, the believer has eternal life. . . . I am the living bread which has come down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and more, the bread that I will give is my flesh, given for the life of the world." The Jews then wrangled with one another, say-

ing, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life within you.

"Even as the living Father sent me and I live by the Father, so he who feeds on me will also live by me. Such is the bread which has come down from heaven: your ancestors ate their bread and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live for ever." This he said as he taught in the synagogue at Capharnaum.

Many of his disciples, on hearing it, said, "This is hard to take in! Who can listen to talk like this?" Jesus, inwardly conscious that his disciples were murmuring at it, said to them, "So this upsets you? . . . What gives life is the Spirit: flesh is of no avail at all. The words I have uttered to you are spirit and life. And yet there are some of you who do not believe" . . .

After that, many of his disciples drew back and would not associate with him any longer. So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go, too?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, who are we to go to? The words you have are words of eternal life, and we believe, we are certain, that you are the holy One of God."

John 6:35, 47, 51-53, 57-64, 66-69

Before we conclude our consideration of the secret of being fully, gloriously alive, let us look back at preceding chapters and gather up the ideas which formed the basis of Jesus' way of life. They include respect for human personality as infinitely precious in the sight of God; courage to champion as right those things which build human character and to oppose as wrong whatever injures it; love, an attitude which combines inexhaustible good will and understanding with

the ability to forgive, willingness to lose oneself in high endeavor and concern for others, and devotion to purpose which says, regardless of cost, "Not my will but Thine be done."

It is a serious mistake to suppose that anyone can achieve fullness of life through idle contemplation of beautiful thoughts and lofty ideals. The religion of Jesus consists not in theory but in practice, in deeds, not words. Frequently Jesus warned us against the insincerity of paying lip service alone to his teaching.

"Beware of false prophets; they come to you with garb of sheep but at heart they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruit; does one gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? No,

every good tree bears sound fruit,
but a rotten tree bears bad fruit; . . .

"It is not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord!' who will get into the Realm of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven."

Matthew 7:15-17, 21

This same insistence on practical applications of religious beliefs was echoed by James, the brother of Jesus, in his letter written about twenty-five years after the crucifixion. James, like other members of his family, did not accept the ideas of Jesus while he was alive. But later James became head of the Christian Church at Jerusalem. Because of his faith, he too died a martyr's death, being thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple, then stoned by nationalistic leaders who considered him a traitor to sacred tradition.

My brothers, as you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Glory, pay no servile regard to people. Suppose there comes into your meeting a man who wears gold rings and handsome clothes, and also a poor man in dirty clothes; if

you attend to the wearer of the handsome clothes and say to him, "Sit here, this is a good place," and tell to the poor man, "You can stand," or "Sit there at my feet," are you not drawing distinctions in your own minds and proving that you judge people with partiality? . . .

My brothers, what is the use of anyone declaring that he has faith, if he has no deeds to show? Can that faith of his save him? Suppose some brother or sister is ill-clad and short of daily food; if any of you tells them, "Depart in peace! Get warm, get food," without supplying their bodily needs, what use is that? So faith, unless it has deeds, is dead in itself.

Someone will object, "And you claim to have faith!" Yes, and I claim to have deeds as well; you show me your faith without any deeds, and I will show you by my deeds what faith is! You believe in one God? Well and good. So do the devils, and they shudder. But will you understand, you senseless fellow, that faith without deeds is dead?

James 2:1-5, 14-20

To follow Jesus, then or now, is by no means a matter of reciting a creed or ritual. He did not think of himself apart from the great truths about God and man which he proclaimed. The personification of those truths, he became the high ambassador of God on earth, the one man in history worthy to be called His Son. To believe in Jesus, therefore, is to accept whole-heartedly his ideas and attitudes as the ruling principles of one's life. Then and then only does one grasp the secret of being truly, fully alive.

Jesus had no patience with the kind of religion which emphasized empty ceremonies, merely burdening life with endless duties to be performed. He denounced the Pharisees for their exaggerated concern about external details while they neglected inner attitudes and qualities of character. He sum-

marily described them as being already dead, "unsuspected tombs"!

When he finished speaking, a Pharisee asked him to take a meal in his house; so he went in and lay down at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he had not washed before the meal, but the Lord said to him,

"You Pharisees do clean the outside of the cup and the plate,

but your inner life is filled with rapacity and malice.

Foolish men! did not He who made the outside make the inside of things too?

Better cleanse what is within; then nothing will be unclean for you.

But woe to you Pharisees!

you tithe mint and rue and every vegetable,

but justice and the love of God you disregard;

these latter you ought to have practised—without omitting the former.

Woe to you Pharisees!

you love the front bench in the synagogues
and salutations in the marketplaces.

Woe to you!

you are like unsuspected tombs;
men walk over them unawares."

Luke 11:37-44

In contrast with these harsh words, he had only praise and assurance of hope for those who had the essential quality of mind and heart to accept the Reign of God and thus to create heaven on earth. He did not include in such a list those of wealth or position or great learning but rather those with certain indispensable traits of character: awareness of spiritual need, love for others, humility, desire for goodness, willingness

to forgive, purity and sincerity of mind, readiness to give one's self to the cause of right and truth.

"Blessed are those who feel poor in spirit!
the Realm of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are the mourners!
they will be consoled.
Blessed are the humble!
they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for goodness!
they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful!
they will find mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart!
they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers!
they will be ranked sons of God.

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake
of goodness!

the Realm of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are you when men denounce you and persecute you
and utter all manner of evil against you for my sake; rejoice
and exult in it, for your reward is rich in heaven; that is how
they persecuted the prophets before you."

Matthew 5:12

Today all races of mankind are threatened with death and destruction because of false ideas within the minds of men. Across the centuries we still hear the promises of Jesus, promises which assure lasting peace and abundant life upon earth. The future welfare of humanity depends not upon atom bombs but upon the determination of young men and women to take seriously the message of Jesus and to resolve that his ideas shall prevail.

... "I am the real and living way: no one comes to the Father except by means of me."

"Truly, truly, I tell you, he who believes in me will do the very deeds I do, and still greater deeds than these."

John 14:6, 12

... "He who believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me, and he who beholds me beholds him who sent me. I have come as light into the world, that no one who believes in me may remain in the dark. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, it is not I who judge him; for I have not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects me and will not receive my words has indeed a judge: the word I have spoken will judge him on the last day, for I have not spoken of my own accord—the Father who sent me, he it was who ordered me what to say and what to speak. And I know that his orders mean eternal life."

John 12:44-50



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